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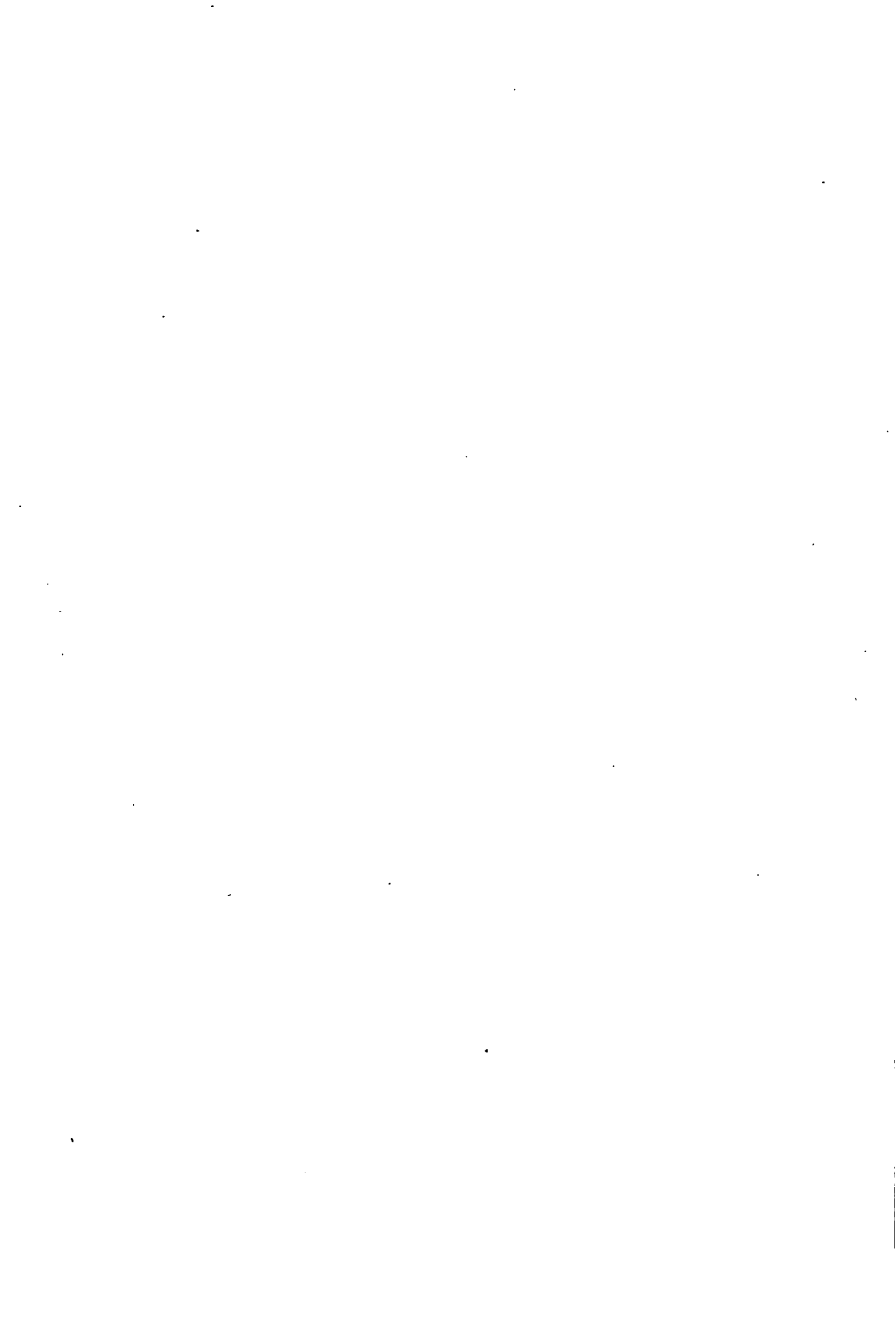
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DIARY

OF A

WESTERN SCHOOLMASTER

J K STABLETON  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
CHARLESTON ILL

J H MILLER PUBLISHER

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## INTRODUCTION

For the past fifteen years most of my time has been given to teaching in schools where I have had to deal with many boys from twelve to twenty years of age, boys in the adolescent period of life. The study of these boys has been full of interest to me; and while I have made no great discoveries, my faith in boys has increased an hundredfold and my respect and love for them has grown more and more.

Not long ago I visited a school of bright young people full to the brim, just as they should be, with animal life and spirits; but a glance told me that for real educational work the school was a failure. I was interested and at the close of the session had a long talk with the teacher in charge. It was an eighth and ninth grade room. How I pitied those young people. The teacher told me

there was not a boy in the room but ought to be sent to the State Reform School. He knew *all their bad points*, but had failed to discover their good qualities. Again I pitied the young people. This teacher (?) had been in charge of that school for eight years, and all the time the boys had been going to "the bad." The people said Mr. A. was not much of a teacher, but such a *good man* and his father-in-law was an influential man on the board of education; so Mr. A. held his position year in and year out.

How many such persons are posing in our schools to-day, who by their very goodness are blighting the lives of the boys of the communities where they are employed! Better far for the boys if these persons could be pensioned outright and "living" teachers put into their places; teachers that have unbounded faith in boys; teachers that have received a baptism of modern educational spirit and believe it their duty to study the boys and the girls even more carefully than their arithmetical problems.

Then, too, I have seen that other teacher, a college graduate, holds a high grade certificate, keeps perfect order, is said to be a fine disciplinarian, but the boys never pass beyond her room. Where is the trouble? No one blames her, she is an excellent teacher, so say the people. The fact

is she neither understands nor appreciates boys. She is too exacting. Boys are loose-jointed at this age, mentally and physically. She thinks they ought to step with the same smoothness of movement as girls; they cannot do it, try they ever so hard, and they do not know why. Their legs are too long or something is wrong, and their hands are only inconvenient appendages. Yet they walk after a manner and use their hands after a manner, too. Their blackboard work looks more like the work of "scrawlers" than ever before, and the teacher wonders why they are so careless. Did she but recognize the fact that these boys are entering a new state mentally and physically, and that this uncertainty of all they do is the uncertainty of their new condition of life, instead of nagging them she would smile and console herself with the thought that soon, with a little patience on her part, they would again become acquainted with themselves and be able to do better than before.

The mechanical movement of this school is beautiful to look at, but there is no soul in the work, no longing on the part of the teacher to be helpful to those that so much need an uplifting friend; no careful study of the life of each boy, mentally, physically, and socially, to be able to reach the secret springs of action to call forth the

good ; but, on the other hand, the teacher is glad when some real cause comes for a boy's dropping out of school. I say real cause, for did not the cause have semblance of reality she might lose her position. But did you ever stop to consider how very few are the real causes for boys leaving school before they have received some good from the higher grades? This teacher does not cast a single lasso of interest about the boys to bind them to school, so they drift away.

With superintendents who are in close sympathy with boys and are ardent students of boy life, and the right kind of principals and of teachers in the higher grades, our high schools would be full of boys, and the girls, too, would still be there. It is not a question of male or female teachers, but a question as to who are such students of boy life as to try to understand them in this evolutionary period and to work in accord with the laws of their being.

This transitional period comes to all boys, but no two are affected in exactly the same way. We should not expect it. "Unity in variety" is the law of nature as well in the physical and mental development of boys as in the leaves and flowers of the field. We may, to some extent, understand "the unity," but "the variety" we must refer to some probably unknown psycho-physiological cause,

and not mistake it for the inspirations of the devil. After fifteen years of work with boys, I am convinced that His Satanic Majesty has but little influence over them at this age, and that when he does the teacher is too often his chief executive.

That man or that woman who can look right into a boy's heart and by a mere glance of the eye make the boy feel that he or she is his friend, is a power. I do not understand it all, but I do know that the eye is a mighty instrument for good, probably because through it the soul of the teacher beams forth in perfect sympathy with the soul of the boy; the boy trusts; and the teacher trusts, directs, and with a strong hand controls. Yet, while there are teachers that seem intuitively to understand boys at this age, there is really less intuition than at first appears. These teachers are students of child-life, hour by hour, day by day, — yes, year by year, they are studying the boys. Ask one of them about some boy and you will be surprised to learn that the teacher knows him in his environments, knows him in his inherited tendencies, knows him in the peculiar workings of his mind.

No greater blessing can come to a boy at this age when he does not understand himself than to have a good, strong teacher who understands him, in part, at least, and has faith in him for the

unknown quantity, and is willing, day by day, patiently, firmly yet kindly, to lead him till he is able to walk alone.

The following sketches are from my own experience, not one fictitious character among them. If they fail to reveal the spirit that should characterize school work, they are not worth the telling.

J. K. STABLETON.

Charleston, Illinois.

## CHAPTER I

### JOE

Some time ago while talking with a man of great financial ability, a man who for a number of years had been one of the leaders in every great financial enterprise in his city, I was forcibly impressed by a remark of his.

He said: "I have no education." "I graduated from our city high school, but my grades were poor and I have not improved since." "I don't know anything." I looked at him. Keen financial sense, accurate judgment, wonderful powers of concentration, and indomitable energy were all his. I thought to myself: "You may not Possess a literary or a scientific education, but you are educated in no mean way; by contact with people and things you have gained an education that is



no more one-sided than that possessed by many who pose as scholars.”

The man who has learned much and learned it well, in the laboratory of real life, has an education not to be despised. That business training gives mental strength must be recognized in dealing with those young persons who have been out of school a year or two, regularly employed in business of some kind, and who wish to enter school again. The mental strength may not be in just the same line that school develops; possibly different brain cells are brought into activity or the activity may be of a very different kind from that induced by school work.

I am more than half inclined to believe that we are unfair when we make so much of manual training and laboratory work in school — and I think we do not overestimate the value of these — when we magnify that training and minify the training received in the shop, the office, and the store, the laboratories of business life.

If, as is now said, school is not a training *for* life but a training *in* life, we as teachers must more generally recognize the fact that valuable mental training may be acquired outside of the school room, and when young people wish to re-enter school, use common sense and place them where

they rightly belong. Too often they are sacrificed to a false idea of "keeping up the grade of the high school."

Joe was a messenger boy and general "roust-about" at the town depot; delivered messages; took the mail bags in a hand cart to and from the depot; cleaned and filled the depot lamps; in cold weather kept the fires going; in fact, did all the odd jobs that in such places always fall to the willing worker.

He was about fourteen years of age, and of such size that the cart filled high with mail bags almost hid him from view. His soot-begrimed face was overshadowed by a full forehead across which were two or three deep wrinkles that gave him an old look. His brow was generally crowned with a rimless crown, or a crownless rim, owing to which had been left him in his last encounter. His prominent nose and cheek bones were more than off-set by a pair of black eyes that lighted up his whole countenance or snapped fire like flint if the occasion demanded battle. He was so bright and quick that the men about the depot were continually pinching him, and punching him in the ribs, or in some way tormenting him just to see him fight back.

I always speak to boys, so when I met Joe at the depot I spoke to him, and we were soon acquainted.

He had been out of school more than a year when I first met him. All this time he had been employed there and was considered by the agent in charge the most capable and trustworthy boy ever in his service. Joe's mother was a widow and it was necessary at this time for him to help make his own living.

One evening I was standing on the depot platform when Joe came up to me and said: "You are going to have exercises at the high school to-morrow; the boys have been telling me about them." There was a wistful look in his face as I replied: "Yes, can't you come up and hear them? We would be glad to have you visit us." "I'd like to hear them, but I'm afraid I can't leave here," said he.

Then his eyes beamed forth as if he were thinking of the dearest scheme of his life, and looking me full in the face he said: "O, but I'd like to go to your school."

"And I'd like to have you in our school," I replied.

"I can't go now, but maybe I can some day," continued he.

We talked a few moments longer, then I returned home thinking what a pity it was that Joe could not be in school.

This was in November. In January I was out

of town a few days, and when I returned home the principal of the high school told me that Joe had come to school the day before, and, instead of going to the seventh grade or the eighth to finish his work there, had asked to be permitted to sit in the high school until I should return, saying that he believed I would let him enter the high school. His class that he had dropped out of in the seventh grade was now the first year class in the high school doing ninth grade work.

The principal was somewhat amused at the boy but permitted him to wait to talk with me about his work. Joe made known his wish to me. I asked him if he thought he could do the work. "I'm sure I can; I've been trying it," said he. "O, but I'll work if you will let me stay in here."

I looked at his intelligent face. I thought of his business record at the depot, and of his ability to work; that he was strong physically and quick mentally so that he would not be injured by a little extra work. I told him that he might try it; that I, too, believed he could do the work; that it all depended on himself whether or not he remained in the high school. There was no question in my mind about his holding his place. I knew he could do it.

A few weeks after he had entered the class, one of the boys made the remark at home that he did

not think it fair that Joe had been permitted to go into the same class he was in when he left school, after being out more than a year. "Does he do the work?" asked the boy's father. "Yes, he does it as well as any one in the class," replied the boy. "Then he is just where he should be," said the father, who was not only a well educated man in the school sense of the term, but also a man of fine business ability.

Joe completed the high school course and graduated, one of the best scholars in his class. He is to-day a prosperous young business man. Had I placed him in either the seventh grade or the eighth, I fear he would have made life a burden to his teacher, and, possibly, yes, I would better say probably, would have dropped out of the school again within a few months.

There are many boys who have been out of school a year or two who would gladly avail themselves of our high school privileges were it not for the fear of being placed too far back in the grades to make up work before being permitted to try the higher studies.

Some of these boys have been compelled by home duties to leave school to work; others, boylike, have been seized with a passion for making money, and, after two or three years of steady business, realize their need of more thorough school training;

yet only a few of these enter the high school. Most of them that enter school again go to some private school or academy, where they are given a chance to try what they can do without basing everything on the amount of school work they have already done; schools where their maturity of mind is taken into consideration; schools where their ability to do is recognized whether it comes from training in school, work-shop, office, or store.

Our public high schools owe more to these young people than they ordinarily give them; and we superintendents and high school principals ought to consider it a part of our business to become acquainted with all such young persons in our midst and to bring them into our schools. We need not fear their lowering our standard of scholarship.

In many cases the parents of these boys are not capable of counseling with them, and after they are out of school a year or two they lose touch with their teachers, so that when they begin to feel that they are short in their preparation, they have no one with whom to advise, and so drift on.

If, however, the high school principal or the superintendent, comes into contact with these young people, and shows an interest in them, he can easily advise them of the possibilities the high school brings within their reach.

Thus many of them can be given an uplift that will place them in a world of new activities. But this can only be where we follow a sensible plan in adjusting them to their places in school, *Ability to do*, and not “ *What grade work have you done,*” must be their test for entrance to the high school.

## CHAPTER II

### TIM

I remember first seeing Tim, a boy ten years of age, just ready to shed his knee pants, a beautiful boy to look at, and with a spring in his movement that so attracted my attention that I turned around to give him a second glance.

He was in the seventh grade, and from almost the first day manifested an unruly disposition. His idea seemed to be that no one should control him. He had been elsewhere to school, and was familiar with most of the mean little ways of annoying a teacher and disturbing the school. He began by telling the boys that his teacher did not dare to whip him; that she would better not touch him, and continued in this way until it became evident that unless he showed a different spirit he could not long be tolerated in the school. When he



made a disturbance, if his teacher spoke to him, he would fly into a violent passion, and become very disagreeable to deal with.

I talked with his teacher about him and finally decided that probably the best thing for him and all concerned would be to give him a strapping.

His mother said, "I can do nothing with him at home, if you can make anything out of him, do it, and use your own judgment as to the means you employ." I studied his case until I felt confident that physical pain would have a very beneficial effect on him.

A few days after I came to this conclusion, the seventh and eighth grades were passed into the high school room to spend an hour. As they were returning to their respective rooms Tim created disorder in the ranks by interfering with those in front of him. I at once stepped up to him and hurried him into an office at the end of the hall. He fought, tried to bite, screamed, threatened, and dared me to punish him. His face was pale with rage, and he seemed like one crazed with anger. I held him until he had spent his force in fighting, and then strapped him. That brought him to his senses and he quieted down. We had no more trouble with him for some time.

After this I was always careful to be as pleasant

with him as though we had had no trouble ; and he was polite and gentlemanly toward me. Still his old disposition was there, restrained only by fear of another strapping. For two years we held him in this way, once in a great while having to punish him.

He was quick to learn, in fact, talented, but all ordinary means failed to awaken the right spirit in him, and the fear of bodily pain alone held him back from being unbearable in school.

Out of school, he was rough, but very industrious, always busy at something. This industry was a good quality, yet his language and manners were such that very few had much use for him. My only hope for him was that by holding him in school, the regular work of the school and the discipline would in time establish in him better habits of living and thinking.

Had we sent him away from school, or to the state reformatory, no one would have found fault ; but I felt then as I feel now, *that the public schools are not only for those of regular habits, but also to help those that most need help.*

Tim passed from the eighth to the ninth grade, and was now under the care of another teacher, one of the best I have ever known for most scholars, but too sympathetic and tender for this boy. She was

sure when the term opened that she could so win him that he would cease to be as he had been and become a pleasure. I was not so confident but said nothing to lessen her interest in him. Everything went well for a time, but only for a time, then he began to try her. She worked hard to get along with him, and did more than teachers would ordinarily do to make him feel her interest in him, but to no purpose.

One day, a few minutes before the noon hour, she said she would like me to be near at noon as Tim had remained out of the room over time and, from his actions, he was doing so just to annoy her and assert himself; that she intended to detain him a few minutes after school to finish the work he was escaping by remaining out over time.

At noon she asked me to please come to her room; then, in the presence of the boy, she explained the situation.

Tim stood at the blackboard in a violent passion, a deathly pallor on his face, and, instead of writing the work neatly on the board, was scraping and marking just to give vent to his anger. I spoke to him and requested him to place the work on the board as directed.

He snarled and said that he would not do it; that he was going home, and that no one could

make him do it. I stepped up to him, caught his hands in mine, and holding him in front of me with his back toward me, asked the janitor, who was near, to open the office door and get me the strap. Tim kicked at me, bit at me, and raved in words it would be out of place to mention here.

I held him, as I had done on a former occasion, until he had tired himself out raving and fighting, then I applied the strap. I used it severely, but not brutally. He became tired of it and said, "If you will quit, I will do any thing you want." I asked him if he *could* and *would* go to his room and place the work on the board as his teacher had directed him. He replied that he would do it; and he did it. This was the last conflict we had with him.

The next year he was under the care of still another teacher. I feared she would have trouble with him, but she did not. His former teacher had been too sympathetic with him, had appreciated his good points, and had let him know it. He could not stand this. He had not yet reached the stage where it was safe to let him know that his good qualities were appreciated. The teacher who now had charge of him knew every good characteristic, and also knew that he was too weak to be treated with anything but rigid justice; that no expression

of interest or sympathy could be given; that he must be held strictly to his work. She had no trouble with him, or nothing of a serious character.

One day, while at the black board, he placed a piece of chalk on the floor and crushed it beneath his feet. The teacher saw the act and quietly told him to take an eraser and a piece of paper and clean up the dirt he had made. He looked a moment, but there was no uncertainty in the eye of the teacher, so he obeyed. Without any one else's knowing it, she detained him a moment at noon and told him *never* to let such a thing occur again. This was the only trouble that, in three years, came between them. He became one of the most trusty boys in the high school.

Up to this time it had seemed a question as to how he might finally shape his course, but now we had great hopes of him. Patrons of the school often remarked that their children said Tim had become one of the best boys of the school. All knew what he had been, and in reply I could truthfully say, "Yes, he is one of the best."

At the end of this year it was necessary for him to stop out a year to work. He told me what he was compelled to do, but said that he could not give up the idea of some day finishing his high school course. He was sorry to leave his class, and we

were sorry to have him leave. There was no danger now in letting him know he was appreciated ; it did him good.

He went to his work, but he was not forgotten. During the year, when his class was invited to my home to spend an evening, Tim was remembered. If anything of unusual interest was going on at the school he was invited over for the afternoon. Often he would come of his own accord to my home to spend an evening. Thus the bond of sympathy was strengthened and his interest in the school was maintained.

The following September Tim was in his place, but with another class. He was so happy to get into school again that he lost no time in lamenting the fact that he was entering a class that was once below him.

What a pleasure he was this year ! His mind, always bright and active, seemed more alert than ever.

Now and then he could have a day or two of work in an office, and he was always excused for it. There was no danger of his losing anything except the class instruction, and the work gave him the means to keep himself neatly clad. He never failed to prepare the lessons he missed, and was ready to recite them whenever his teachers wished

to hear him. Often when he knew he could have work, he would prepare his school lessons in advance, and at the close of school in the evening would say that he would like to be excused the next day as he had work, and that he had prepared the advance lessons and would recite them before going home if his teachers preferred.

Thus a year passed without a break on Tim's part, and no one now thought of his doing anything but what was strictly right. His standing in the high school was as good as the best, and outside of school his conduct was no longer what it had been; he was a gentleman. At home his mother said he was like a different boy, and his people were very proud of him.

Thus he continued till within a year of graduating when the summer brought new conditions. The drouth blighted the crops, and the financial stringency of the times made those who had not other resources than their daily income from labor, wonder how the demands of the coming year were to be met. Tim's parents felt the problem was one they needed to consider, and after talking and planning as best they could, they could see no other way than for Tim to drop out of school and work. This seemed more than he could well stand. He could not help it, but broke down and cried.

His mother cried too, then she said he *should* go to school; they would manage someway; that come what would he should finish his high school course that year.

This last year he passed in a most satisfactory manner and graduated in June, respected by his teachers, fellow-classmates, and the people of the community.

I knew his family and connections well. His mother was an excellent woman, and at the time I first became acquainted with the family was living with her second husband, Tim's step-father. I also knew his mother's father and brothers. Her father was a man of more than ordinary intellectual ability, but strongly passionate, and until late in life had made use of intoxicants. His sons, Tim's uncles, were much like their father. One of them, when in a passion, was a desperate man; as a result of his wrong-doing he had served two terms in the State penitentiary. Another had an almost equally quick temper, but ordinarily was a kindhearted man, yet a man whom it was not best to make angry. That same tendency to fly into a passion that at first was so noticeable in Tim was characteristic of his uncles, and had interfered much with their best interests in life.

Since Tim graduated he has been an industrious,



trustworthy young man, respected and honored by all.

A little incident that occurred two years after he graduated throws some light on his own views of himself. It was nearing the close of the school year and the high school alumni were preparing for their annual meeting. The committee on program had assigned Tim a place as one of the speakers. As he had been teaching, the committee requested that he would relate some of his experiences with corporal punishment. He was witty, and the committee hoped to hear something funny; but immediately on receipt of the notice of his subject Tim called at my home and asked me if I thought the committee remembered what a time he himself had had when I first came to superintend their school. "For," said he, "you had to punish me as you did to bring me to my senses, and it was a blessing to me. You did the right thing, but I do not like even to think how I was at that time, so I believe I will ask for another subject that will recall nothing but pleasant memories."

I had learned that in rare cases physical pain would bring a boy to his senses when too angry to stop to reason. I tried this on Tim and found it true with him. After I made this discovery I considered his case in this way. He had probably in-

herited a tendency to fly into a passion and had been permitted to do much as he pleased. His street education had also been against him. He had a fine intellect, possessed unusual power to concentrate his mind, and was very industrious. He was now at the critical period in life when he was more apt to give way to anger than at any other time. If by any means we could control the objectionable features in him and at the same time develop his intellect and cultivate his better nature, his better self would gain the ascendancy, he would learn to govern his temper, and make a valuable citizen. But, if left as he was, he would be ruled by the play of passion and possibly become a worthless member of society. I asked myself the question whether it were not better for me once in a while to give him a severe strapping and thus make it possible for him to be under the educating influence of the school, rather than to send him out into the street, or perhaps to the State reformatory.

I answered it thus: there might be, and doubtless was, something other than corporal punishment that would bring about the desired result, but I had not been able to find it, and it was my duty to administer that which I knew would be helpful to the patient. This is the spirit in which I resorted to corporal punishment.

From this short sketch of Tim and our work with him you cannot easily see how much thought was given to his case. I studied him from every possible standpoint. I have given you only a faint conception of the facts as they actually were.

## CHAPTER III

### CLARK

In the year 1885 I was elected principal of a denominational school in one of the Western States. In this position the management of the boys fell largely to me.

Among the boys that entered the fall term of 188—, was Clark, about fifteen years of age, short, heavy-set, with a round face, thick lips, a big mouth easily set into a grin, large, dark brown eyes, a heavy suit of jet black hair, and at first a rather pert manner in his general make-up. While his features were none too regular, a kind word or some little attention brought a bright light into his eyes and his whole face beamed in a happy smile.

Clark was in the lower classes, so that it was some time before I became much acquainted with him. On Halloween night a number of the boys engaged

in some sport which it became necessary for me to consider the following day ; and in straightening up the affair, I had private talks with a number of them. Clark was a visitor at my office. He came to see me just after noon and was much excited and very uneasy. I soon found he had done nothing to which I could object. He cried as if his heart would break, and said that if his uncle who had sent him there should hear of his having been up before me for disorderly conduct he would be taken home. That evening, after I was through with my work, I called at the house where Clark was boarding and invited him to take a walk with me.

As we walked along he told me the story of his life. This was what I desired to know. His father and mother had died within a few months of each other, leaving three small boys. Clark, then five years of age, was the oldest. There was but little property, so the boys were left to the care of relations. The youngest was taken by a grandmother to another State ; the two older ones fell to an uncle, who gave them a home, or rather a place to stay, but his manner toward them was such that the younger had gone, they knew not where. Clark feared his uncle very much, and said that if he did wrong his uncle punished him severely ; if

he did right there was never an encouraging word. This and much more he told me of himself, his home, and his people. I have become acquainted with his people since then, and know he told me the truth.

While talking with him I was careful as to what I said. I advised him to look at the other side. Boys often get such notions into their heads when the facts are exactly opposite; then, too, a poor home was better for him than no home at all, and his uncle had manifested some interest in him or he would not have given him the opportunity to attend school.

He told me further that he and the principal of the local school could not get along together; and as his uncle wished to be away from home for some months he had sent him to us to be cared for. Thus we talked together for an hour, of his home, his people, his conduct at the home school, of what was expected of him with us, of the friends he would have in the teachers; and when we parted, I knew I could help the boy to a better life, and his happy manner told me he felt that I was his friend.

He was with us three years; he was not always perfect in his conduct, but he was always true. He was a jolly-hearted, high-spirited boy and sometimes made little "breaks;" but his intentions

were always good. He trusted me implicitly and made me his confidant in all things. I trusted him also, and the bond of friendship between us became very strong.

Once the woman with whom he boarded called to tell me she could not keep him longer as he was too disorderly, too loud, and she thought he ought to be sent home. I listened patiently to what she said and promised to talk with him.

I knew he was not intentionally disorderly, but so full of life it was hard for him to keep himself within bounds. He was in good health, very strong physically, and of an impulsive, hilarious make-up, and just at the age when he was least able to control himself, and I did not wonder that his noise was sometimes more than the woman could silently endure.

I told him of the complaint, at the same time explaining what I thought of his conduct, and requested that in the future he take care to give vent to his effervescing spirit out of doors, and not allow his fun to disturb others in the same house. There were no more complaints.

When I became acquainted with Clark's uncle, I saw the secret of his trouble with the boy. The uncle intended to do right by him, but was a man born with a narrow, selfish soul, that could not well

take into his affections anyone beyond his own family; and while he gave Clark a place to stay and looked after him quite closely, his heart was sealed against the boy, and the boy was starving for love and sympathy. Clark was impulsive and warm-hearted, an affectionate boy that could scarcely live without an intimate friend. The uncle failed because he withheld the one thing the boy needed.

At the end of three years Clark dropped out of school and went to one of our large cities to earn his living. The little money left him had been used in sending him to school and now he must try life for himself. He had secured a position through a friend, but knew no one in the city. I felt anxious about him, and during the first six months I wrote him regularly once a week. I knew he needed a friend, and in return he told me all his little "ups and downs" that mean so much to a lonely boy. Then as he had become somewhat acquainted, I wrote less often; but to-day, after ten years have passed, the letters still come and go. He is a prosperous young business man in that city and the bond of friendship between us is as strong as ever.

Do not think I take the credit of Clark's doing well to myself; far from it. There was good in the boy. I did my best for him at a time when he needed a friend. Sympathy, firmness, and honest



dealing will do much to help a warm-hearted, impulsive boy, who can so easily go astray, across the uncertain age to good, strong manhood.

It pays to study a boy, to know him as he does not know himself. I admit it takes time; but he whose soul is imbued with the spirit of the Great Teacher will find time for the work.

## CHAPTER IV

### JOHN

In September 188—, John entered our school, a Western denominational school. He was fifteen years of age, of medium height, a slender but well formed body, rosy cheeks, a peculiar dark, almost black eye, and jet black hair always nicely kept. At first sight he was called a fine-looking boy, in fact, rather handsome; but to me there was something strange in his walk that seemed to indicate a weak trait in his character. As he walked he carried his head slightly forward; this with a certain vibration of the body gave me the impression of the sinuous movement of a snake.

He seemed to enjoy school and did good work; was bright and quick at learning, gentlemanly and attentive: his conduct was all that could be desired.

Soon, however, I heard some of the boys remark that John was the biggest liar in the school; but it was a number of weeks before anything came to me by which I could judge for myself.

One morning about the eighth week of the term, he failed to put in an appearance at his classes and sent me word by one of the students that he had mumps. I did not think he was sick and sent him word to be at my office at the close of school in the afternoon.

It happened that I was called away from my office just before school closed that afternoon and when I returned, the president informed me that John had been in to see me and that he was badly stiffened up with mumps.

I asked if he examined John to see if he really had mumps.

He replied that he had made no examination but took it for granted as the boy was well wrapped up about the neck and face.

I was still of the opinion that he was playing off so sent him word to call at my office before school the next morning. He came, stiff-necked and a big scarf coiled round and round his neck and face. I unwrapped him, straightened up his head, told him he was cured and that he could remain for the morning work.

He was completely taken by surprise, not expecting anything of the kind. I asked him why he had done as he had ; what his object was. He replied that he wanted to be out of school a few days and took that plan. He looked me straight in the eye, his eyes slightly squinting and said, " I lied about it and don't know why."

I talked with him, not a long lecture, but a few words to try to find something on which to work, to make an impression ; but found nothing.

He never disagreed with anything that was said and was always sure that he would not do so again, but the very next occasion he was as untruthful as ever. Still he was kind-hearted, obliging, and possessed many good qualities.

At Christmas we were tempted to send him home to stay ; his class work was good but his word could not be depended on and we had about given up hope of correcting him in this respect ; finally, however, we decided to try him till the close of the year. He came back and remained with us to the close of the year in June.

As I knew him better and studied him more closely, I found he never hesitated to tell an untruth even when discovery was certain. There was something really pitiful about him in his untruthfulness, a helplessness that was hard to understand.

When talking with the boys he was untruthful without knowing it, but sometimes his words showed considerable planning.

In the afternoon of Decoration day of that year, I was just leaving the cemetery to go to a friend's when one of the boys came to me to know if I had seen John, saying that John had received a letter to come home at once as his aunt Carrie was dead. I asked the boy if he had seen the letter. He said that he had or he would not believe it.

When I returned to the college, John met me at some distance from the building, the corners of his mouth drawn down, his eyes full of tears, and told me that his aunt Carrie was dead and handed me the letter. I invited him into my office, then read the letter. It was as follows: —

“Dear John, your aunt Carrie died in Washington last week; will be buried here Thursday. Tell Prof. Stableton to send you home on the first train.

“Your Uncle Charley.”

After reading the letter I looked at John and told him that he had written the letter. It was not his handwriting, but I felt without question that it was his own work. He rose to his feet, so indignant that he could scarcely control himself, and asked me if I thought he would be so little as to write that letter.

I told him that I thought he wrote it, and in the morning would send a telegram to his uncle and prove that I was right. He said, "All right, Professor, do it, and you will find I am telling you the truth this time."

I requested him to call at my office early the next morning to go with me to send the telegram.

The president said he thought I ought to send the boy home at once.

I said "Never," that if his people would put such a boy into my hands and then write him instead of writing me, he could not go home, no difference who was dead; that I knew they would write me, and that it must be the boy's own work.

The next morning John was on hand. I asked him to bring the horse and buggy from the barn and call me at the office window. In a few moments he drove up and we started for town. As we were driving along I inquired of him which one of the men in the post office had given him the letter.

He told me, adding, "Professor, you will find that I am telling the truth this time."

I almost wavered in my opinion and said that we would go to the post office first. I left him in the buggy, and went into the post office. No letter had been given him. I returned to the buggy,

and as we started off I said, "John, where were you when you wrote that letter?"

He replied, "I was in my room."

"What made you do it?" I inquired.

He answered, "The Devil."

Then I said, "I think he did," and we drove back to school.

He seemed greatly relieved and went right to work. I did not punish him, — said but few more words than I have given above. I had done all that I could to help him, but to no avail, and knew that no words of mine could make an impression on him at that time.

As he had told a number of the students they didn't cease until the end of the year to inquire of him about the funeral. When the year closed, he left us to return no more.

The next I heard of him he was in the state reform school; at the present time he is serving a term in the state penitentiary.

These facts concerning his people I gathered; his mother was a cultured, Christian woman and her people were of like character; his father, a man of moral worth, and of high standing in his community, died when John was a small child. After his father's death John fell to the care of his mother and an uncle who give him his way in everything.

Even before his father's death he was a petted child whose every whim was humored as he was thought very bright. His father left him well provided for financially.

While I do not think that I did him any good, I did hold him in check for one year, and outwitted him in almost every instance. This was all I was capable of doing and it required no little tact. I admit failure in his case. I have studied him very closely and compared him with many others since then and have one or two possible solutions that I might offer but will not. I have given the facts as I observed them.



## CHAPTER V

### TAD

I have always taught in co-educational schools and know how great care must be exercised on the part of the teacher, and how necessary a perfect confidence between scholars and teacher is, in order that there may be nothing but what is proper in the daily mingling of the sexes at the age when the sexual passions are developing.

That some boys and girls "fall in love," so to speak, is just as natural as that children exposed to the measles take the disease. The problem that concerns the teacher is how to nurse them through the sickness.

Whenever I see boys or girls physically developed beyond their years, yet mentally backward, I feel that they must be carefully guarded for a few years until their minds catch up with their bodies.

Sometimes it happens, even where the mind develops equally with the body, that the young people have received a physical inheritance which makes them extremely susceptible to the influence of the opposite sex. With these two classes teachers need to keep in touch. They are not evil in that they are so easily affected by the opposite sex, but may easily be led into wrong and must be protected.

If the teacher holds the full confidence of the boys and fully comprehends the situation, they will pass through the experience in safety; the same is true of the girls. I have never in all my teaching, found a case of "falling in love" that any ordinary so-called school discipline could cure.

Tad was almost seventeen years of age when he entered our school, a denominational academy. He was the son of a Methodist minister. His sister, two years younger, entered school at the same time. Tad had always been accustomed to the society of young people so it was no new thing for him to meet young girls and be in their company.

He was always ready with his work and was pleasant though quiet in his manner. He had been in school only a few weeks when I noticed that a certain young girl seemed the center of attraction to him; but I thought it would be a thing of short duration and probably not take his mind from his

work. I was mistaken; to use Samantha Allen's expression: "Love had come to him and it was going hard with him," so hard with him that he was falling short in his work. I knew him too well to say much to him, but waited. I felt sure a change would come soon.

In the meantime his sister wrote home that Tad was so interested in one of the girls that he could not study. The father wrote Tad a severe letter condemning him for letting the girl take his attention. This enraged Tad. He wrote his father a sharp reply, then called at my office and told me all that had occurred. He was deeply in earnest; said that his father had no right to send him such a letter, that he loved the girl and intended to marry her some day.

Now was my time. I asked him if he wanted to marry her right away.

He said: "No; but some day."

"*Some day* you will be of age, then no one can hinder you from marrying her," said I, and added: "For the past month you have been losing ground on account of this affair; it is time you quit worrying and go to work; you must fit yourself to take care of her when you do marry her." I told him to love her all he wanted to but to be a man and not a foolish boy.

This relieved him. He soon settled down to work and before the end of the year he had ceased to care for her and she no longer cared for him.

All this time we guarded them carefully that they might not be placed in any uncertain relations, but did nothing that they could interpret as an attempt to break their friendship.

Had I bitterly opposed the boy or openly or privately upbraided him, there would have been no confidence between us, and under such conditions I should not wish to be responsible for results. While vigilance is necessary, no amount of vigilance will make up for a want of confidence.

## CHAPTER VI

### SAM

Sam was thirteen years of age when his people moved to our town and he presented himself for admission to school. He was very large for his age, with a well-formed body, good shapely head, light brown hair, honest gray eyes, and a face set in a continual grin. The grin was the weakest appearing thing about him. As I became acquainted with him, by talking with him, watching him, and conferring with his teacher about him, I learned that Sam was a boy with almost a man's body, but with a child's intellect.

His father and mother, his older brother and sister were excellent people. But within only a few weeks after coming to town he had established a reputation as the loudest boy on the streets, a wild,

"harum-scarem" tough, whooping and yelling whenever opportunity presented itself. He thus lost the respect of the community and was given a standing in accord with his conduct. He was so boisterous and loud at times on the streets that many believed him half crazy.

At school the conditions were unfortunate alike for Sam and his teacher. She had formerly been one of the most successful teachers in the school but this particular year she was in such poor health that she was almost hysterical, and could stand but little that grated on her nerves.

Sam's face was never free from a grin, and he was restless and ill at ease. He never seemed to study, yet made a fairly good showing in his work. He was not wholly to blame, as he needed a steady-nerved teacher, while his teacher needed rest. But it was a case where the superintendent was powerless to make a change before the end of the year. There was no other room for the boy and the teacher could not be removed.

Sometimes the teacher cried when talking of Sam, he worried her so; not so much by what he did, but because his grinning face and restlessness were a continual irritation to her. I advised her to give him a seat in the part of the room where he could be least seen, and to quit worrying about him.

But under the conditions his year in school was far from satisfactory to me or to any one else.

When farm work began in the spring he told me he had secured a job on a farm and was going to work. I did not discourage him in it, but encouraged him to be ready for school again in September. I thought it best for him to work off some of his physical energy, believing that in the coming year he could make up all he would lose under existing circumstances; for no one could doubt that the nervous state of the teacher affected him unfavorably and that his peculiar condition was an irritation to her.

In September he returned, larger, stronger than ever, but still boyish. He made me think of a big English mastiff pup, overgrown in everything except his intellect, and always ready to play.

His teacher this year was a steady-nerved woman, who came nearer understanding him. He did well in his work for a few weeks and then began to lag. The teacher labored hard, but no effort on her part could keep up his mental activity. She became discouraged with him and finally asked what she could do or what else she should try. She said that to make him do the work of the grade would take more time than she gave to a dozen ordinary pupils.

I said: "Let him alone if he does not bother you; let him do what he can when given only the attention due him, if you can do it without his disturbing you and the school." I said further that he was developing so fast physically that he seemed to have no vital force to furnish mental power, and that when he quit growing his mental powers would probably strengthen.

As he did not bother her or the school, she took my advice. Of course he did only part of the work of the grade.

Again, when the neighboring farmers wanted help for the spring work he dropped out. I favored it, thinking he needed something that would give him freedom to stretch his rapidly-growing body. However, I never let him think that I thought there was any question about his returning in September. I took quite an interest in him and he knew it.

That summer, whenever we met, we had a little "chat," and incidentally his attention was directed to school.

When September came he began almost where he had begun the year before, thus taking two years for the grade. While he was still boyish and "grinny," there was a marked mental development, and he did fairly good work. Sometimes he was



very trying and had to be plainly reminded of his place and work.

The farming fever caught him again a few weeks before the close of the spring term. His people were in very moderate circumstances financially, and as I knew every dollar he earned went to the home, I thought this in itself an education of great value to such a boy.

Before he left I had a talk with him about his school standing and explained how important it was that he should not miss more than was necessary; that the next year he would be in the second year class in the high school, and he would not like to fall behind there. After we had considered his school work and the necessity of his having a place for the summer to earn money, I told him to come to school every day that he did not have work; that I would rather have him in school one-half or one-fourth of the remaining part of the term than to have him miss all of it.

This pleased him. He went away feeling that he was still a part of the school. This was just what I wished. He was in school about one-fourth of the remaining time, and when the term opened the following year he was one of the first in his place.

Sam was now under the care of another teacher. This teacher and I had talked over his case, and

decided that he was now capable of doing good, heavy work, and that he must do it.

Sam knew the teacher was in sympathy with him, yet at the same time he knew that she would put up with no short work on his part. He complained sometimes that she was hard on him, but when asked if he wished to be allowed to do as he pleased, and then take two years for the work he was capable of doing in one, he would put himself to the work with renewed interest.

His teacher often said that had she a dozen like Sam she could not teach. Not that he meant to be ugly or disagreeable, but he was still so grumpy and restless that it drew on a teacher's strength just to hold him day by day steadily to work.

This year closed, and it was by far Sam's best year's work. In mathematics, particularly, he was showing much strength.

When Sam had been in the high school two years he had tamed down on the streets, in fact, was much changed, and the people remarked that he was becoming a different boy. I never failed to speak a good word for him, and felt safe in predicting that he would come out right if given time. I talked to him freely of his conduct out-

side of school, and he willingly listened to what I said, though it was often only a short time until he did something rude or rough; but notwithstanding this, he was gaining. Sometimes when I spoke strongly in his favor some one would ask me what I could see to give me faith in him. I did not always try to explain, but said to give him time and it would be seen that there was cause for my faith.

One day his mother said to me that they had been scolding him at home when he told them to ask me about him, — that he knew I would not say he was *all* bad. It pleased me to know that he realized that I appreciated the good that was in him, for his realization of this was a strong factor to help him on to better things.

Two years more and he would leave the high school; but a new trouble beset him. He “fell deeply in love” with one of the high school girls.

We guarded them carefully at school and gave no opportunity for their being together except in the presence of a teacher. They began to meet regularly on the way to school and to walk to school together. This would not do, so I talked to them privately, explained that it would cause unfavorable remarks about the school, and asked that it be not indulged in. I said for them to happen once in a

while to meet just as others did would be proper, but the "happenings" *must not come too often*; it would not do for people along the way to see them regularly walking to school together. After this there was no trouble. Once in a while they met and came together, but not regularly as before. They tried to do as I wished, although it required effort for them not to "happen" along about the same time.

It surprised me to see the amount of excellent work which they did when I knew all the circumstances. At the girl's home was trouble; her parents forbade her having anything to do with Sam. They talked and reasoned with her, threatening to send her away.

She was not to be moved by such measures; she and Sam met of evenings, walked the streets, and they were laying themselves open to unfavorable comments. Sam thought her parents were unkind and mean to her, and so did she.

One morning her parents talked so plainly to her that when she started to school she left a note which stated that she would not be treated so any longer and was going to leave home.

The father found the note soon after she had gone to school and went to the high school to see if she were there. She was in her place. Sam was

there too. I was at one of the other buildings when the father called. He asked to see the principal, and informed her of the note and their trouble with the girl at home.

When the principal told me what had occurred I determined at once to see the father and try to influence him to deal with the young people in a different way. He was only driving them on, and serious results might follow.

That evening I called to see the father. He was glad to talk with me, and said that he and his wife were at a loss to know what to do next. I told him I had been watching the young people very closely and could see but one thing for him to do, that was to quit opposing the boy and the girl and treat them no longer as little children, but as young people worthy of some consideration; to look the matter squarely in the face and make the best of it; that while the boy was not the one he would choose as a companion for his daughter, he would not be able to prevent their doing as they pleased; and it would be better for him to send the young man word to come to their home the following evening and to talk with him. I advised that he tell him he could keep company with his daughter, but that he must come to her home when he wished to see her; that he could go with her to church and

other public places ; then to ask them both to be guarded about being on the street as they had been, that in everything their conduct might be above reproach ; to talk plainly, yet kindly, to them. If he did this, I believed the affair would die out ; but if it did not, Sam was full of energy, and there was a great deal more good in him than he was given credit for, and the day might come when he himself would not be ashamed to own Sam as his son-in-law.

The father said I might be right and he would act on my advice. I also agreed to have a talk with Sam and tell him what had passed between the girl's father and myself, and to advise him as might seem best.

The following morning I had a long conversation with Sam and gave him in detail all that we had said. He smiled and looked a little ashamed. At first I told him I wanted to talk with him about something that he might think did not concern me, but I believed that when I was through he would not feel offended.

He understood me and said to go on, as anything I had to say would be right. He was much pleased at what I had done, and said that he had already been invited to spend the evening at the girl's home.

I counseled him to be a man in the affair, and if he cared anything for the girl, and I knew he did, not to do anything that would reflect on her or himself, either; that the way they had been doing was hurting both of them; that above all things he must lay aside all ill-feeling he might have against the girl's parents. I explained why he should not wonder that they were not much in his favor; that they knew how boisterous he had been, and like many others, thought him worse than he was, and that the parents' feelings were perfectly natural; that he must prove to them now that he was worthy their respect.

He left my room smiling, feeling that I had championed his cause better than he could have done it himself.

And now, after several years have passed, no one has any cause to regret the arrangements that were thus made. They both remained in school two years and graduated. Sam's last two years' work was fine, and he was a good scholar when he graduated. He is now a teacher. The sentiment in the town has largely changed in his favor. He is recognized as an upright, honorable, energetic young man.

## CHAPTER VII

### MARK

Mark had a thin, pale face, shoulders cramped in upon a hollow chest, and a body and limbs whose clothing never suggested the outline of a muscle; restless and inattentive, but not unusually dull. He was childish, sometimes so childish that it seemed to indicate mental weakness; yet in his studies he was only slightly behind those of his own age (thirteen) and was doing fairly good work. However, it required no little effort on the part of his teacher to keep him from idling away his time. He would, if permitted, spend hours playing with nothing more than a string and a bit of paper; not interrupting those about him, but frittering away the hours in play so simple that it called forth no activity of the mind.

His fourteenth year was but a repetition of his



thirteenth, except that his childishness was more noticeable. His physical condition was unchanged and growth seemed almost checked. This year he finished the work of the eighth grade. He was not the poorest in the class neither was he one of the best.

During his fifteenth year, he was less able to do mental work and was more frail physically.

During his sixteenth year, he was very sluggish mentally and physically, and as much a child as at thirteen. He could not take all the regular studies of his grade, so his work was lightened, but still he could not do it well. He was very weak during the spring term; and so sluggish that he would sometimes unconsciously fall asleep even while trying to listen to a class explanation.

This unfortunate condition was not the result of any personal habits, as he was carefully guarded in this respect. He seemed to have come to a point where it was a question whether or not his vitality could carry him farther.

His father now decided to give him a year of freedom from school or restraint of any kind, in hope that he might gain physical and mental strength. Mark spent the year just as he pleased, visiting, hunting, reading, lying around doing nothing, with no aim, no ambition. An idle listless

year; probably a profitable year to him for it seemed he could do nothing but rest.

In the fall of his eighteenth year he again entered school, but, while somewhat improved in health, was not capable of doing a full year's work. The first half of the following summer he did nothing; was without interest in anything.

"Past eighteen years of age," said his father, "and a mere boyish boy; he will never amount to anything."

The father was not now so patient as formerly with Mark, and upbraided him for his worthlessness. One day at this time, the father said to me: "My wife and I have lost all patience with Mark and to-day I told him he was nothing but a block-head, and never would amount to anything. We cannot understand why he is so worthless."

I counseled him to be careful or he might do his boy great wrong; that for some reason the physical and mental development of the boy seemed arrested; that upbraiding him for what he could not help might so discourage him as to ruin him forever; that what he most needed was sympathy, and an expression of faith in him to help him to keep up a cheerful frame of mind; and that these should come from his home friends; that there was yet time for the boy to make a man.

The father in reply could only express a hope that I understood Mark better than he did and that my faith in the final outcome would prove to be well-founded.

Several weeks later, just a few days before the opening of the annual session of the county teachers' institute, Mark called on me to ask me what I thought of his attending the county institute and in the course of our conversation told me that he had decided to teach a country school that fall. I was pleased to see him planning to do something and encouraged him to attend. He was present every day, wide-a-woke, ready to catch every suggestion that fell from the lips of the instructors, and very happy in it all. I looked at him, no longer a boy. The rounded muscles, the full chest, such as had not seemed possible, and the bright eye; the vigorous thoughts of early manhood, told in no uncertain language that he "had been born again," and was a new person mentally and physically. "When I became a man I put away childish things," was literally verified in his case.

The father met me one day of the second week of the institute and said that he wished to thank me for so awakening his son. I laid no claim to the "awakening" power. The boy was changed from no effort of mine.

The faith that I had had in Mark was not born of intuition but was the result of the observation of a number of somewhat similar cases. Mark's apparent development was completely arrested for several years; and then in a few weeks the wonderful change was accomplished. Yesterday a boy, to-day a man.

I have no explanation to give. Mark's and one other case that I will relate, have suggested a question: could their labored and long-delayed development be due to inherited constitutional weakness? There were strong indications of tuberculosis on the mother's side in the case of Mark. Could it be that an inherited weakness made it hard for the body to gather force to accomplish the great change of puberty, and so caused the existing conditions?

I only ask the question. This much I do know: teachers cannot too carefully deal with such young people. The disappointment of parents too often shuts off sympathy at home, and teachers, looking upon them as weaklings physically and mentally, hope only for them to drop out of school. Young teachers, especially, look upon such cases as hopeless objects on whom it is a waste to spend time. We who are older and have observed and studied these things have seen too many miracles wrought

by the new "psycho-physiological birth" to treat in a slighting manner any of these that so much need attention.

When Mark was twenty-five years of age, he filled a responsible business position and was quite a literary student, devoting a few hours each day to a chosen line of study. He was far superior to many of the boys who in their teens outstripped him in the race. As his father expressed it, "There is no young man in our community the superior of my son; he has no bad habits; is mentally and physically sound; and is a clear-headed business man."

The causes of such arrested development properly belong to the work of specialists in other lines; but the plain, practical, uncommon common-sense plan of teaching and training these young people must be sought out by the teacher.

Into this problem three factors must enter; first, we must not lose faith in the possible outcome; second, we must win and hold the confidence of these boys; and, third, we must not discourage them nor cause them to lose the little faith they may have in themselves.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DICK

Dick came from one of the best homes in the community, a home where the children were dearly loved by both parents ; a home where every possible care was given to the physical and mental welfare of the children ; yet it was a home where there was lung trouble on the father's side, and in which tuberculosis finally made its appearance.

Dick attended school regularly from six years of age to twelve. Then, on the advice of the family physician, he was permitted to do as he pleased, go to school or stay at home. He was not sick, but weak, and needed to be in the open air. He was too deeply interested in school to give it up entirely, so was made welcome in school whenever he felt like being there, even though he were present but half the time.

Dick had never been quick at learning, and hence was not so well advanced as most boys of his age. His parents were sensible in this regard, and did not wish him "pushed" along for the sake of keeping with neighbor boys of his own age. They were in close touch with the teachers, and talked freely with them, and thus aided much in dealing with Dick. Without the co-operation of parents such cases become very annoying.

From twelve years of age to eighteen was a trying time for Dick. A part of this time he was physically unfit for the school-room, and his mind was much as his body; yet he was never willing to drop out of school entirely. The family physician said that Dick was constitutionally weak, and might or might not grow stronger.

Dick was one of the best of boys in his intentions, always trying to do just the right thing; but he was restless, and could not study without making a noise. Often when he became too restless, his teacher would send him on some little errand, or give him work at the blackboard; anything to bring his muscles into play, and thus rest him. He never suspected that the errand, the work, or whatever it might be, was simply a means of quieting him.

If he went out to run or play at violent exercise of any kind, he was so wrought up for the next

half-hour after he came in that he could do nothing but fidget and grin. Some days he would be grinny, almost hysterical, ready to laugh at any little thing that happened, and scarcely able to stop laughing after having once begun. The only hope at such times was to center his attention on something of interest, and thus quiet him down.

In his seventeenth year he developed more rapidly in mental power, but along with this came a peculiar nervous state. He would sit at one end of his seat, swaying his body backwards and forwards from his hips as a fulcrum, rubbing one hand on one knee, unconscious of everything around him, all the while doing good mental work. If not permitted to sway his body thus, he accomplished but little. Some such movement of the body seemed absolutely necessary to mental activity.

Do not misunderstand me, he had never been encouraged, or even permitted to study in this manner; but now he could do no mental work unless some part of his body were in motion. As his manner became very annoying to those about him, he was given a seat in the rear part of the room where he could be seen by but few and was permitted to study even though somewhat noisily.

During the first half of his eighteenth year, he began to be recognized as one of the best thinkers of



his class, but he was still a boy with the instincts of a boy; but the year brought him great changes, and by the end of the year he was fast taking on the indications of early manhood.

As this change came about, much of his restlessness disappeared and his whole manner greatly improved. The young children that were companions for him the first half of the year were dropped and he sought those nearer his own age.

Dick graduated from the high school when past nineteen years of age, fairly strong physically, a young man of good average ability, and of more than ordinarily good, common sense.

From twelve years of age to eighteen the parents were filled with greatest concern for him, and the mother would often say when speaking of him: "Poor boy, what will become of him." The father was more hopeful, and said that he himself had developed very slowly and so he would not lose faith in his boy.

There were at least two years in the life of Dick and also in that of Mark, when many teachers would have "worked" them out of the high school and felt that they were ridding the schools of weak ones that were not worth the time given them. I say would have "worked" them out.

I will explain: last year, in talking with a high

school principal in one of our large cities, he said that they had a great many enter their high school who were not very strong mentally, and that they got rid of them by putting on such a pressure of work that the weaker ones were glad to leave the school; and thus the teachers were saved much trouble, and the standard of the graduates was kept very high. I have no doubt that Mark and Dick would have been "worked" out very early in their high school courses had they been under this principal.

I do not object to putting a fair pressure of work on high school students. I would just as soon hope to learn to skate by sitting on the ice as to hope to get the intellectual power that comes from high school training by sitting in the high school.

The man who is hauling coal and has two teams, one of heavy draft horses that can draw two tons at a load, the other of ordinary horses that can draw but one, does not load up his lighter team with two tons and thereby make it impossible for it to do anything; but to the heavy team he gives two tons and to the lighter team but one ton, and both work equally well. While it is true that it will take the lighter team twice as long to haul the coal, yet when the coal is hauled it is just as well hauled as if the heavy team had hauled it.

So the wise high school principal will not strive to "work out" these weaker ones by giving them the work that only the stronger ones can do; but will try to know the ability of each one and then will give such work as each can do, and do well, all the time trying to interest more deeply everyone in the work of the school.

The boy that can carry but a part of the work this year may be stronger next year; but, even if he is not, in the fable of old it was the tortoise and not the hare that won the race.

We superintendents and principals are not experts in unfolding the futures of the boys at the high school age. We must work carefully. We would better give opportunities to ten boys that fail to develop, rather than to "work out" one boy that might develop.

## CHAPTER IX

### CHAP

I wish to give sketches of three boys that for some reason I associate together in my mind ; three boys, in every way so different from each other, each with such a strongly marked individuality, that they were interesting studies to me.

Chap at thirteen years of age was a perfect dynamite bomb. Muscle and brain were both surcharged with energy. He did nothing by halves ; lessons and manual labor were both put through with a vim that was delightful to see. No one in his grade ranked above him ; no boy could curry a horse and hitch him to a buggy more quickly than he ; no boy could swing onto a broncho and skim over the prairie more gracefully than he. The rough, wild life of the cow-boy, suited him. An old sombrero, a blouse, and a pair of overalls held

up by one suspender, an old wagon with a broncho team to drive at break-neck speed, and he was happy.

Yet when occasion demanded, Chap could be a perfect gentleman. He simply bubbled over with life. A hip, hip, hurrah! and away on a broncho! This high, wild life, was a safety valve for his surplus energy.

Thus far in Chap's school work he and his teachers had gotten along well. Sometimes like a frisky colt he needed to be reined in, still he and his teachers were always on good terms and happy in the work. But now as he passed to the ninth grade, new conditions met him, and he himself was reaching a more dangerous point where fun seemed worth more than all else.

The ninth grade teacher this year was inexperienced in the work, but having had two or three years of college training, was supposed to be in her educational qualifications the best prepared of the applicants for the position. When I found that it would be necessary to place her in charge of the grade, I feared the results.

She was of a gentle unsuspecting nature, and her voice lacked that decision so essential to good discipline in the grammar and early high school grades.

Conditions were thus unfortunate for Chap. He

was ready to detect any weaknesses on the part of his teacher and to make the most of them. All went well for a short time, when the trouble began.

Chap was a leader, and so sharp and cunning that he could shoot shot, or scatter a handful of snapping match heads, or with a quivering movement of his legs shake the floor, and yet escape detection. He was proud of the standing he was fast gaining among the pupils for bringing disorder into the room. Even the best were "falling from grace" and joining his standard. Children are born "hero-worshippers." He showed what he thought of his teacher one day when he said, "Miss Short is a fine lady, but she's too good to teach school; why, she can't even boss *me*."

His disorderly conduct at school had a bad effect on him at home, and while he had never been easily controlled at home, he now became so restless, almost defiant, that his parents were much concerned.

A word as to the home, while not strictly a part of this story, throws side-lights on the boy. Chap's mother was an excellent Christian woman of more than ordinary strength of character. The father was a man of good intentions and very active in what he took to be his line of duty, but he did not cultivate the friendship of his boys. As Chap came to the critical period in a boy's life the father was

far from him. In talking with the father one day he said to me: "I am kept so busy with my business and church work, that I do not have time to keep up acquaintance with my family. I scarcely know them."

I felt that what he said was unfortunately too true, and I wondered what would be the outcome of such neglect. I do not question his intentions, but I seriously question his wisdom.

Now, when Chap so much needed to feel a real fatherly love and friendship, there was no strong cord to hold him. The father could help the teacher but little in managing the boy.

After a few weeks a change was made in the teacher of the ninth grade, so that the remainder of the year was much improved. Still the year as a whole was not one to interest Chap, and as spring came on he grew restless, the school-room was too narrow for him; he longed for the freedom of unrestrained out-door life.

At the opening of school the following September, Chap was ready for whatever was to come, work or fun, no difference so there was plenty of it. Luckily for him he was now under a teacher that knew him and felt herself equal to him whatever might come up, a teacher who appreciated and admired his vigorous life.

Chap respected her from the first. There was that something in her very presence that commanded his respect. To refuse her request never entered his mind. During the entire year he was never reproved. He seemed happy, and often, as I looked at him, he made me think of a prancing colt at the end of a rope held kindly yet firmly in the hand of his master.

The teacher that knows now to let such a boy prance just enough to keep him in good spirits yet holds him from breaking away, is a power for good with the boys of this grade. The whole future school life of many a boy depends on who is his teacher at this time in his life.

Chap had once been one of the best declaimers in his class, but now he was too self-conscious to do well, so he was excused from declaiming. He had been a good penman from the time he began to write; now, while his writing was still good, the lines were irregular and somewhat careless looking. He was not upbraided for becoming careless. His enlarging muscles were a little unruly; time would give him complete control of them. A little patience on the part of the teacher was all that was needed.

A year passed and there was not an uncertain stroke in Chap's writing; his self-con-



sciousness had left him and he was glad to declaim again.

Chap is interesting to me chiefly as a boy where there seemed to be at no time any lack of either mental or physical activity. He never seemed to relax for a moment. If he were not studying, energy was not wanting, but simply diverted to other channels. When he knew he must study, he could center his attention on the subject before him and be oblivious to everything else about him.

Chap studied less out of school than most pupils, or he could have finished the high school course in a much shorter period than four years.

At eighteen he graduated from the high school, vigorous mentally and physically, and with energy that promised much for his future.

This boy, with a bold, daring spirit, every nerve and muscle throbbing with intense life, needed a teacher that could appreciate that this vigorous life was in itself good; that could make the boy feel that she was not suspicious of him as one who would do wrong, and at the same time one who would cause him to understand that fun could not go beyond bounds in her school.

He had a contempt for a gentle, unskilled teacher that thought that boys ought to be too good to have fun by interrupting a school. He believed that a

boy would have fun even if he had it by making sport of the teacher. Helplessness on the part of the teacher did not appeal to him in a very strong way, or as he said, "I did feel sorry for her but it was lots of fun to see the boys and girls all laughing, and the teacher so helpless she couldn't do anything."

Some may say that boys ought not to be so. All I can say is the Lord made them, He knows; and the teacher must take them as they are.

## CHAPTER X

### WILL

Will had been a fair-skinned, white-headed lad up to the age of fifteen when he suddenly changed into an "almost" young man with a delicate complexion, light hair, and shapely body that indicated physical health and strength. He was fond of the same sports that Chap was fond of but not in the same dashing, reckless way.

The change from a boy to a young man came over him just as he entered the high school. Always slow mentally, he now became slower than ever, and so self-conscious that but a word made his pink cheeks crimson.

He was painfully slow but stuck to his work with a perseverance that was worth more than mere intellectual quickness. I sometimes thought were I

in his place I should be strongly tempted to give up the idea of a high school education. One thing was in his favor, after he once learned a thing it was his so that when a subject was completed he often knew much more than many who had done much better than he in the recitations during the term. He was never absent from school, never failed to be present at a recitation and thus kept the lessons connected from day to day.

Will was fortunate in his home, father and mother both deeply interested in him and in close touch with him. The father, in particular, gave him much of his time, was companionable with him, and held his confidence.

Both parents were sensible people, and I could talk freely with them. They understood their boy, knew how slow he was in his work, and believed that it was his peculiar way of developing and did not fret and worry because he was *not* other than he was.

There had been a time when he was in the lower grades when they thought that possibly the teacher was at fault, but they visited the school and found that the boy was slow from no fault of the teacher. From that time on they held him to his regular school work at home and thus supplemented the work at school. They knew how to hold him to

his work and yet not do his work for him and thus weaken him.

This home study, rightly directed, was the thing that made it possible for him to pass from grade to grade year after year. He was so strong physically that his parents had no fear of injuring him by requiring this regular home-study even at an age when children ordinarily should not study out of school hours. I doubt if he would ever have entered the high school had not such care been given him.

In his high school work his parents were not disgusted with either boy or teachers but said that as long as he was working faithfully and interestedly, and making a medium standing in his class, they were satisfied.

The second year in the high school was almost a repetition of the first. His habits of application formed in the lower grades, were now his stay. In this laborious way he completed the high school course, the last two years not, possibly, quite so slow as the first.

I have seen many boys of this slow mentality, if I may so call it, drop out of school because of lack of co-operation between parents and teachers. Parents, unwilling to believe that their boys are not so quick at their work as most other children, are

too often ready to lay the want of advancement to the slackness of the teachers and after a time to become prejudiced against teachers and permit the boys to drop out of school. Such boys are safe only when parents and teachers have such an understanding that they can counsel together concerning the best interests of the boys.

When parents ask why their boy does not advance as some other boy, or why he seems to be the poorest in his class, there is only one thing to do, state the facts if the boy is unusually slow; but state them very carefully or offense will be given. That a boy is slow does not necessarily imply that he does not possess a good mind. Early York cabbage planted in May head out in June and the heads are the size of a quart cup; but Flat Dutch cabbage planted in May head out in November and the heads are the size of a half-bushel measure.

There are other heads that grow the same way.

## CHAPTER XI

### HARRY

Harry was the seventh son and had he been the seventh daughter, the old saying that the seventh daughter is gifted, would have been verified in this case. He was a beautiful, little, red-headed fellow of eleven years when he entered the high school; so boyish-looking, and yet so manly, that he at once won the admiration of the whole school.

He seemed made of finer clay than most children; a body that a sculptor might vainly try to reproduce; a gracefully poised head; and a clear gray eye from which peeped forth a soul all alive to higher things.

He cared less for a broncho than either Chap or Will, but enjoyed base-ball, skating, and other manly sports. At home Harry was a student no

less than at school, yet no one could call him a book-worm.

When Harry stood up at the side of some "six-footer" to recite, he looked diminutive, indeed; but when he had finished reciting, he had so thoroughly treated the topic that no other member of the class could add thereto. Did some pupil eighteen or nineteen years of age fail to recite, the little fellow was ready to fill in the break. Not offensively putting himself forward, not in a bigoted way, as if proud of his own strength, but so unconsciously that no one ever thought of being jealous of him, though he far surpassed them all.

He was never called to account for improper conduct. Were you to ask what we did with such a boy, my answer would be that we directed him in his studies and left him to himself.

From year to year Harry grew as an ordinary boy, physically not at all beyond his years, and when just past fourteen, still in knee-pants, graduated from the high school as fine a scholar as ever went out from the school. When I say he was not at all developed physically beyond his years, I do not mean that his physique was not what it should be for a boy of fourteen, for he had fine physique for a boy of his age; in fact, he was one of the best specimens of physical vigor in the class.



After graduating from the high school, Harry spent one or two years as delivery boy for a store, then entered a university, where he is a student to-day.

Some may say he graduated from the high school too young, that he was pushed, and should have been held back.

I do not think so. Did you ever walk with a person who walked so slowly that it made you tired to walk with him? Then you ought to appreciate something of the irksomeness of marching four years lock-step with those who can take only one step to your two. The nerve-wear that comes from holding some boys and girls back is equally as injurious, it seems to me, as that which comes to others from unduly pushing them forward.

It is true Harry did the work of the school in a much shorter time than most boys and girls require, but I fail to see why he should not when he could do it with no undue effort on his part. I admit that he is an unusual case, an extreme one, if you wish; but what was right in his case is right in every case, that is to know the boy and try to give each individual boy the work that seems best suited to him.

This is my object in bringing these three cases together, to show that the school work, so far as we

were able to judge, was suited to each individual boy's needs. Will, the slow one, was not found fault with for not possessing the same mental precocity that marked Harry, but his industry and perseverance were so appreciated, even though his progress was slow, that he never felt himself one whit less worthy than Harry. Chap, while not precocious, possessed what I have called, possibly incorrectly, a vigorous intellect, but lacked that stick-tuitiveness and dogged perseverance that in Will amounted to almost genius. The work of no one of these three could have been exchanged for that of one of either of the others without a serious misfit.

All three of the boys are to-day in higher institutions of learning and so far as I am informed of their work are as markedly different as when in the high school.

This fact presses itself home to me more and more, that teaching is after all a hand-to-hand, intellect-to-intellect, heart-to-heart contact with individuals, and that in all this direct work a good grain of common business sense must be exercised. Classes are necessary in the movement of school work, but the teacher who stops short of a knowledge of individuals must remain more or less a failure.

## CHAPTER XII

### TOM

Tom came to us at fifteen years of age, a tall angular boy, a large Roman nose, one eye slightly crossed, very uncouth in his manner, awkward and ungainly in his movement. His home was in the country, eight miles from town. The first year he was with us he rode a broncho back and forth, morning and evening. Of a number of boys in his father's family, he was the only one that aspired to an education.

He had been in school but a short time before we discovered that he had a keen intellect. He was always prepared with his lessons. The scholars soon gave him the recognition due to superior intellectual strength, and, unpolished country boy that he was, he was treated with deference by all.

One year in the high school greatly improved

him. His hair, his neck-tie, and his shoes were no longer "unknown quantities" but had passed from the  $x$ ,  $y$ ,  $z$ , to the  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$ , of his equation; and his manners were more changed than his dress.

He was in the high school three years. He not only did the three years' work and did it well, but he also read a great many valuable books from the library. He was always improving his spare moments with a book. He read more good books than any other member of the high school, during the three years he was a member of the school.

During the last two years he was in the high school, he worked for his board and lived in town. An elderly couple gave him a home for doing their chores. It was a good home, the work was light, and he had plenty of time for study.

In a high school where there are many of only ordinary ability, it is, to say the least, rather interesting to meet such a one as Tom. One who seems to take in great "chunks" of information and to digest them as easily as if they had been ground to meal.

He made himself felt in almost every line of school work. In the debating society he was a leader, and developed considerable ability as a speaker. He made use of every available means to improve himself.

Thus busy at work he moved along till the latter half of his senior year. Coming from the country and not being a member of any of the little social cliques that so often cause jealousies among town girls and boys, he was the recipient of honors that otherwise might have gone elsewhere. Now was the time for electing the valedictorian for commencement. His class-mates by unanimous vote elected him to the position.

He had prepared his oration, and the close of the term was near at hand. What was my surprise and disappointment to have a friend come to me and tell me that Tom had been guilty of forging a check a few days before. He had forged it at one of the banks on the old gentleman with whom he was living.

The friend could not give me the particulars, but thought I ought to know it as it was known by a number of persons and was fast spreading over the town.

"What ought I to do!" was the question that came to me. I must decide quickly. If true, I could not feel that it would be right for him to hold the position of highest honor on commencement evening.

I soon decided that I would go to him, tell him what I had heard and ask him to tell me what had

been done. I was sure he would trust me as a friend, and that whatever mistake he had made or wrong he had done, he would talk with me and that thus I could help him to do what would be best for him and best for all.

Humiliated, almost crushed, with tears streaming down his face, he told me his story. The old gentleman with whom he lived had money in one of the banks, and when he wanted some for use, would have Tom fill out a check, take it to the bank and bring him the money. Tom had done this often, but one day the temptation came to write the check for more than the old gentleman wanted and keep out a part for himself. As he did most of the old gentleman's business, it would never be discovered. He yielded to the temptation and kept out the money.

This was several weeks before and no one had suspected that anything was wrong until the old gentlemen's son came to visit him and in looking after his father's business at the bank, found one check that did not tally with its stub.

This called for an investigation. Tom confessed, made good the amount, and was forgiven and retained in the home. This is the story as given me by Tom and I found it to be true.

I felt sorry for him, could forgive him the wrong-

doing but could not prevent the humiliation that must necessarily follow. Could he, should he be permitted to hold the prominent place on the class program after having committed such an offense? Would it be for his good even if others were not considered? I felt it must not be.

I told him as kindly as I could that I thought it would be in place for him to tender his resignation as valedictorian of the class; that he could write it out and I would present it to the class; that I would interview the members of the board of education, some of whom had already heard of what had happened, and ask them to grant him the privilege of graduating; and that since he had made restitution, I would sign his diploma, hoping that this one wrong would prove a lesson. It was hard for him, it was no easy task for me, yet I could see no other way.

His class-mates were called together, the matter was laid before them. I told them how I felt and what I thought; asked them to consider it carefully, with a kindly feeling for the offender, then to tell me what they thought would be the right thing to do; that not only their actions but mine too would be largely governed by what they thought. There was no ugly spirit in the meeting, all felt that they must help render a decision and

that they must not make a mistake. They accepted his resignation and elected another to the place, but they did it in such a way as not to make him feel that he was cast off.

I interviewed the board. All felt that his offense was a very serious one for a bright young man of eighteen, but as it was his first, so far as we knew, they granted my request in his behalf. They were willing to give him every chance to redeem himself.

Commencement night Tom sat humiliated while another filled the place that had been his, but his stepping down won for him a sympathy that made all kind in feeling toward him. All felt that he had had justice tempered with mercy.

Probably the story is not worth the telling; but teachers who have not been through similar experiences, do not know how heavily such things draw upon one's sympathies, and how difficult it is to deal justly and yet so wisely that no violence is done to any one's sense of right. Here is where many high school principals and teachers fall short; they do what *they* believe to be right, but for want of tact and a close sympathy with the scholars, they are not able to look at the offense from the standpoint of the girls and boys, and so fail to meet the requirements of the young people's sense of justice.



After graduating, Tom taught country schools for a few years; built up a good reputation as a teacher of ungraded schools; in all his dealings, conducted himself as a man of honor; saved his money, entered a higher institution of learning, from which he graduated with honor, and is to-day a promising young man in professional life.

Whether or not I dealt wisely with him, you must judge. He trusted me through it all and we are still warm friends.

This instance and a number of others coming under my observation in which boys of his age placed in responsible positions where they handled money for other persons and were not strictly honest, have caused these questions to come into my mind: "Is there anything in the peculiar condition of boys' minds at this age that renders many of them more liable to yield to the temptation to steal than at other times?" "If there is, will it, too, be of a transitory nature like most of the experiences of adolescence, and if not permitted to develop itself by indulgence, in time pass away without leaving any permanent effect on the character?"

## CHAPTER XIII

### HENRY

Henry, a large, raw-boned boy of nineteen years of age, presented himself at the high school one morning at the opening of the spring term and asked to be received with the privilege of taking certain studies he had selected rather than the regular course as he was to be in the school one term only. I saw at a glance that he was selecting those studies that would fit him to take the teacher's examination, and as I was glad to have him interested in school granted his request.

He settled down to his work with a determination that meant the mastery of every lesson; but day after day as he sat and worked or even when reciting there was something of a distressed look about him, a kind of a stern, hard-set expression in his face that made me pity him. I could not look at

him without feeling that he was alone in the school ; that outside the work there was no pleasure for him there. In fact, so stern and set was his face that he almost repelled any advances that were made.

Most of his recitation work at this time was under one teacher and his manner of reciting was such that she felt that he was always questioning whether or not she knew her work. Finally one day in mental arithmetic, after she had explained a problem he spoke out very abruptly and said that the solution was not correct. She, without seeming to notice his disrespect to her, simply asked the class to please look over the solution very carefully before the next day as she was sure the solution was a correct one. Henry scowled and looked more forbidding than ever but said nothing.

The next morning before school was called, Henry spoke to the teacher and said, " *You are right in your solution of that problem, I know you are right. I was wrong but I have studied it until I understand it now.*"

From that time on he presented a different attitude toward the teacher ; he had all confidence in her so that she instead of being annoyed by him as she had been, was glad to have him in her classes ; but he was still the same unhappy, stoical looking young person as he sat at study in the assembly

room, and in nothing did he seem to have any part with the other scholars.

I made a number of attempts to talk with him, at first to no purpose. He was in school several weeks before I knew much more of him than that he was an unhappy-appearing, hard-working country boy who rode a pony to and from school morning and evening. Finally one of the school-boys told me that Henry was one of a large family of boys and that he had served a term in the State Reform School. This explained, or seemed to explain Henry's peculiar manner and also the fact that the other scholars paid but little attention to him.

My interest in him was now deeply aroused and I determined to come into touch with him in some way.

As the weeks went by he improved in his work so that his teacher often commented on it and said that he was such a student that he ought to finish the high school course. When I saw how he could do the work, I too felt that he should try to arrange his work with a view to completing the course. I had a long talk with him, told him of the good reports of his work and after he opened himself up and was interested in talking with me, told him that if it were at all possible he ought to plan to be in

school until he could complete the high school course.

“Why, I have never thought of such a thing,” said he, “I am too old.” “How old are you?” said I. “I’m nineteen years old, and I could never be in school three years more.” “No; I can’t do it,” said he. “But you ought to and you would like to if you could?” continued I.

He admitted that he was really enjoying school and that he would like to complete the course if such a thing were possible, but thought he was too old.

I knew his mind was opening up to the possibility of the thing and that he must have a little time to think it over, and that I must not try to force him to a decision, as he did his own thinking. However, I saw that he was much pleased to know that we cared to have him become a member of the school looking forward to graduation, and his face brightened.

I could now talk with him and made it a point to cultivate his acquaintance. Before the close of the term he said to me: “I think I’ll take your advice and stay in the school till I graduate, I’ll be pretty old when I get through but I’ll know a little something and I do like the school.”

By the close of the spring term he had established

the fact that he was a good student and this in itself gained for him a certain respect among the other students; but his stoical, forbidding manner, and his having served a term in the state reformatory kept him from mingling freely with them.

The following September Henry was again in his place in school, anxious to arrange his work with a view to completing the course. This year he worked so faithfully, accomplished so much, and was so honest and upright in all his ways, that he fast won the high regard of the entire school; and when he entered the debating society and proved to the boys that he was a match for their strongest debaters, he quickly became a leader and was selected president of the society, which position he filled with honor to himself and to the society. He studied parliamentary law and as president held everything strictly to that law. The fact, that he had been in the state reformatory was now forgotten in the Scriptural sense of the word. He was respected for *what he was*.

The last two years he was in school he was president of his class, an honor that he rightly deserved. It is true his abrupt manner always clung to him, the want of early refining influences could not easily be overcome, but notwithstanding this, all knew that he was every whit a manly man and as such he

held their confidence. He was a power for good in our school. One strong, rugged character, capable in every way, always standing for that which is strictly right, is one of the best influences that can be brought into any school.

After he graduated from the high school he taught school a few years, saved his money and then took a course in a higher institution of learning, and is to-day a valuable member of society, one whose intelligence and education give him influence in the community where he lives.

It is not so much *what* the boys study when they enter school, I am willing they should choose what they like best, anything to get them interested ; but it is of *great importance* to thoroughly arouse their interest and *to lead* them to study what will give them as rounded a course as possible.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GEORGE

George entered our school a month after it opened one fall term and took up the work in the Freshman class without difficulty, except in the Latin. This, at first, gave him trouble but by the end of the second month he was as good as any in the class.

He was past eighteen years of age and had never before attended other than an ungraded country school. He was large and strong, and possessed an excellent mind. But notwithstanding his fine physique and bright mind, he did not at first present a very attractive appearance for he was clad in very plain, coarse clothing that indicated that the closest economy was necessary for him to be in school at all.

The first time I talked with him he told me that it was uncertain how long he might be in school as



his people had just moved into town and were not yet decided as to how long they might remain.

He became deeply interested in his studies and was able to do, and did do well, almost twice as much work as any other boy in the same class. This was in part, at least, due to his being two years older than most of those in his class; still he had an excellent mind and a vigorous body and was willing to bend every energy to his school work.

The weeks went by quickly for him and soon it was the first of March, and he was beginning to think of spring work. He had no choice, *work he must*, and that just as soon as he could secure a place on some farm.

During the year we had often talked of his school work; but now I felt that I must help him to see how it would be possible for him to continue with it until he could complete the high school course, even if it were necessary for him to cut short the school term at both ends. I asked him if he ever thought of completing the high school course.

"No," said he, "I have never thought it possible. I am always a month late entering school in fall and am compelled to drop out early in the spring, so how can I hope to finish the high school course, even if we continue to live in town?"

"Very easily," I replied, "with your habits of

study, your mature mind, and strong body, and with a set determination to finish the course, I *know* you can do it. If you will but try to do the work, I will see that you have every opportunity while in school to make up what you have missed by being out a few weeks in the spring and the first month in the fall. I am sure you can do it."

George was pleased and said, "I never thought such a thing possible before. I'll do my best and every day I am not working I'll be in school."

He, soon after this conversation, began work on a farm and was not again in school until a month of the following fall term had passed. When he again entered school he was thoroughly alive to his work. In some studies there were many lessons to be made up before he could gain anything from the recitations; in others he could begin the recitation work with the classes and later make up the back work. Thus he began, earnestly, vigorously working to bring up the back work, and in part of the work preparing and reciting the advance lessons with the classes. — It is almost wonderful how much work a good, strong fellow can do when he is working for a definite object. — But little help was given George, yet long before the time for him to drop out of school again he was fully abreast of his class. He was strong in the class.

Thus he worked year after year until he graduated; the last spring, however, he remained in school until the close.

The very fact that he did so much of his work with but little attention from the teacher, made him independent, self-reliant, willing to do the hard parts as well as the easy, and when he graduated he was recognized as one of the most scholarly members of the class.

It pays to help boys to see the possibilities that lie within their reach. We teachers in all our work ought to remember that the *schools are for the boys* and *not the boys for the schools*.

## CHAPTER XV

### NIM

Nim's early history so far as anything is known of it is this: when but six or seven years of age he was taken from the streets of New York City and with a number of other boys sent to Kansas where homes were found for them among the farming people of that State. Of his parents he remembered nothing, and the records of the society that sent him to his Western home give no clue to their identity.

It was Nim's lot to be adopted by a farmer who lived on the border line of the rainless district in western Kansas, a farmer who each year found it harder and harder to make ends meet and, finally for the sake of a change, if not with the hope of bettering his condition, moved to the valley of the Platte in central Nebraska.

Here he rented a farm and worked hard to make a living ; but the sweat of his brow scarce earned his bread ; one year the drouth parched his crops and the next they were destroyed by hail. Thoroughly disheartened by such a life, he became ill-tempered, and Nim found it impossible to live peaceably with him and many unpleasant scenes occurred between them.

The farmer finally decided that he would send Nim to the state reform or industrial school, when Mr. Stone, a gentleman from our town who owned a ranch near Nim's home, offered to give him a home for a time, at least, on his ranch.

Nim was fourteen the spring he went to Mr. Stone's ranch to work and all the summer long he worked on the ranch and lived pleasantly and happily with those in charge of it.

In September, he came to live with Mr. Stone in town that he might be in school, a better school and a longer term than he could have in the country. Mr. Stone clothed him as neatly as any of the boys and treated him as kindly as though he were his own son, nor permitted him to miss a day of school.

Nim was a fine-looking boy, bright in mind, and attractive in manners, and soon entered into the life and spirit of the school. He began in the seventh

grade and at the close of the year was promoted to the eighth. When school was dismissed for the summer vacation Nim went to work on the ranch. In September he returned to school.

This second year passed with him as the first. Mr. Stone was very careful not to permit him to loaf about the town when not in school; before school of a morning and after school of an evening he had his chores to do, and after these were attended to he was required to give his time to the preparation of lessons for the coming day. I do not mean that he was allowed no time for sports and play with other boys; he had his full share of time for recreation and improved it too; but I mean this: Mr. Stone systematized Nim's work and play so that a year in school meant a year of earnest effort and improvement.

At the close of this year he was promoted to the high school. He was now sixteen years of age.

On account of sickness in his family Mr. Stone found it necessary to spend a year in another State. As this broke up his home he could not look after Nim as he had done the last two years.

Nim, now sixteen years of age, began to shift for himself. He secured work in the country and I knew no more of him until a week or two after school opened the following September, when I re-

ceived a note from him telling me he was working for a certain farmer and that his job of work would be completed within a few days and asking me to please help him find a home in town where he could work for his board and attend the high school.

It happened that just a few days before this Mr. Kane, a friend of mine, had asked me if I knew of any boy that would like to work for his board and attend the high school, so I wrote Nim to come see me at once, that I thought I could help him. He came and through my influence secured a home in one of the best families in the town.

His work was light, a cow to milk morning and evening, a horse and buggy to take care of and as there was never a rain in the winter season, it took but little work to keep a buggy in good trim. He was treated as one of the family, was given his own room, heated night and day, in fact, was better situated for his evening study than half the students of the high school. Of Saturdays Mr. Kane gave him work on the farm and paid him full wages for the same so that Nim could have his own pocket money.

The first month Mr. Kane was delighted with Nim and Nim was equally pleased with his new home. But before the end of the second month things were changing. Mr. Kane said Nim was

staying out late at night, and at school we were not satisfied with his work.

I talked with Nim; he admitted that he sometimes remained out in town later than he should but thought he could quit it, and would try to give more time to the preparation of his lessons. But there was improvement only for a few days then he was out at night and behind in his work at school.

I said to Mr. Kane that he ought to tell him what he could and what he could not do, as Mr. Stone had done, that I believed Nim would obey him; but Mr. Kane was a Southern man, and said that he had once been able to "boss" colored people but he could not command white persons about his own home; that if he had to "boss" the boy as he had once "bossed" the "darkies" he would rather not have him about the place. "But," said he, "I cannot turn that boy out of my home while he has no place to go and we like him very much, but we know he is not doing right."

At school Nim was not accomplishing what he was capable of doing simply because his time outside of school was so taken up with other things.

Spring came, Nim secured work in the country and left school for the last time. Had Mr. Kane held Nim with the same firm hand that Mr. Stone had done, he might, in time, have come to the



point where he could see for himself what was best or he might have resented it and done worse than he did. I am inclined to think a strong hand would have been a blessing.

I knew him for two years after he left school. He was the same Nim, a handsome fellow, liked by all who knew him, but never developing any real independence of character. When the Cuban war came on he enlisted in the army and since then I have heard nothing of him.

I do not know that our interest in him did him any lasting good ; it placed him within the reach of a high school education but he failed to improve the opportunity ; had he been willing to make good use of his time, he could have had a home at Mr. Kane's until he graduated from the high school ; but it seemed that when he realized that he was responsible to no one outside of school that he was not capable of directing himself to his best interests. And yet, all considered, his early life, his unpleasant boyhood, is it to be wondered at that he failed to make the most of himself when freed from restraint?

## CHAPTER XVI

### NATE

I had been in charge of the schools at G—— but a few days when one of the teachers asked me if I had made the acquaintance of Nate, as she put it, the “thorn in the flesh” to the last principal.

I replied that I had not or, at least, not in an unpleasant way. Nate had been in school from the first day but had done nothing to attract my attention other than that his general bearing had marked him as one of the leaders among the boys. His full, high forehead, his high cheek bones, and strong lower jaw, that seemed to close with the clinch of a vice, and his clear gray eye, that seemed to penetrate whatever it was turned upon, gave the impression of an unusually strong character. He was about fifteen years of age at this time and had three years of high school work before him.

In the grammar grade he had been the acknowledged leader in arithmetic and English grammar. A problem that Nate could not solve was a rare thing and he prided himself not a little on his ability to deal with almost all of the little knotty questions that came up in the study of grammar in the high school; that is, he could cite authorities on most of these points thus showing an intimate acquaintance with most of the grammars accessible to the school. The other scholars stood somewhat in awe of his accomplishments in these two lines of study. In other work he was above the average until he came to algebra; in this for a time he fell far short.

The teacher who had charge of Nate's algebra class was a good teacher in some things but in algebra accomplished nothing. The class finally became so discouraged that I made a change and took charge of it myself. Although bright boys and girls, they had come to think algebra was a little beyond them and were willing to give it up. Day after day I worked to overcome the deadening effect of the former teaching and gradually they became interested and willing to believe they could learn it. Day after day we drilled carefully on the simple process of factoring until most of them felt a certain confidence in themselves and were glad to try the more difficult problems without so much as a

suggestion from me. But Nate sat with his teeth firmly clinched together fully decided that he could not learn and therefore it was all a waste of time for him to try. In fact, he had so fully convinced himself that he *could* not learn that he *would* not learn.

I permitted this to go on for several days hoping that his sense of pride would be aroused by seeing the others becoming independent in their work, but he was not to be so moved. One evening I detained the class after school to give them a drill on a more than ordinarily difficult case in factoring. Nate took his place at the board but failed to follow the dictation. At first, I did not apparently notice his stubborn manner but suggested to him what to do just as pleasantly as though he were putting forth every effort. He followed in a heartless way with no attempt to understand the process I was teaching them; he was closed against everything that had to do with algebra, for, as he said, he *knew* he *could* not learn it.

Finally he became so angry from being out-of-heart about it that he broke out in words and said: "I can't learn algebra and I'm not going to keep on studying it either. *I won't do it, I'm going to quit.*"

I waited a moment, the class looked amazed,

then I said in as pleasant a manner as though he had said nothing out of place, "Nate, you are going to learn this case of factoring before you leave this house this evening, and you might just as well begin at once." "I know you *can do it* and you *must do it*."

He turned again to the black-board, angry and humiliated, more from his discouraged feeling than from anything else, I thought, the tears streaming down his cheeks, and closely followed as I dictated problem after problem, I standing where I could see that he did the work just as I dictated. I was determined to hold him to the one point for an hour but what he should learn it.

I called on different ones to explain the problems as they solved them, and before the end of the lesson called on Nate. I gave the problem, he solved it, and explained the process. Then I asked him if he understood it. He replied that he did, and that he could solve any of that kind.

That was all I cared for from him for the evening. The fact is, that a good part of the hour I devoted myself specially to him, holding him to the one thing by sheer will force, the others of the class working with very little attention from me.

After we were through I smiled and said to Nate that it did him a great deal of good to get so angry,

and asked him what he supposed would have happened if I had gotten out of humor, too. This was asked, not tauntingly, but in a pleasant, friendly manner, that he and the class understood. All laughed, and we parted in good humor, and the work for the day was ended.

That lifted Nate out of the "slough of despond," and never again did I help him with a problem in algebra, and ever after he led the algebra class with perfect ease.

I knew he had the power to do the work, and that in some way he must be made conscious of it; that if I could but center his mind on the process and have him follow it a few times from dictation, and quit thinking for a moment that he *could not do it*, he would see through it instantly, and he would become conscious of his ability to do, and would put forth the effort.

When I saw him so agitated I felt that then was my time, not simply as some one might say to "break his will," *not this*, but to calmly, and pleasantly, hold him to performing the process until his mind, highly excited as it was, should grasp the fact that he was doing the very thing he was saying he could not do.

After completing algebra he was in my classes in plane and solid geometry, and trigonometry. He

was a fine student in all this work, and never in need of an explanation from any one. I remember once in the trigonometry class that no one could solve a certain problem the first day it was given, but no one was willing to have it explained. "We can work it if you will give another day," said the class. I gave the day, but the problem was still unsolved. "Give us one more day and some of us will solve it without your help," said the class. Another day was given.

Before school the next morning Nate came into the high school room smiling and said, "I've solved it. I was sitting down at the barn last evening and thought it out while there. I've just worked it in my head, but I know it's right. I'll put it on the blackboard for you to see it." Without a book he stepped to the blackboard and rapidly worked out the problem. It was a difficult one involving the solution of a number of triangles but he had so studied it that he drew his figures and worked out the required results just as quickly as he could use the chalk. He was the only one that solved the problem without help.

When I first began work in the schools at G——, the boys had no pride in their school, no school spirit. A perfectly lifeless routine affair. This I knew must be changed, that we must have such

strong class work that the boys would realize they were getting something for their time and that there must also be something other than lessons in which they could be interested and feel that it in a special sense was theirs.

Without discussing the good of declamatory contests in themselves I have learned that as a means to an end they are an excellent thing. A good declamatory contest rightly managed begets a school spirit that is most healthful.

I determined to close the term with a public declamatory entertainment. But then came the question how to induce the boys fifteen or sixteen years of age to speak. In a school where there has been no speaking, this is a serious question. Before announcing publicly to the school what we were going to do, beginning with Nate I took the boys privately one at a time, explained to them what I wished to do and asked their help.

I talked with Nate, stated that I would like to give a declamatory entertainment at about such a time and would like him to be one of the speakers.

"But I can't speak" said Nate. "That's true, Nate, but you can learn to speak and you would like to do that, I'm sure." "Father is a good declaimer and I would like to learn, but I am afraid I couldn't do any good" said he. "I'll



tell you what I'll do, Nate, if you will agree to try to help me out in this, I'll find a piece, drill you in speaking it, and then if you think you cannot speak it well enough to speak it in public, I'll excuse you from speaking it." "Is that fair?" "Yes, it is fair," said he. "Well, you talk it over with your father to-night and tell me in the morning if you will do it" said I, "but don't speak of it to any of the other boys until we have decided what we shall do."

The next morning Nate told me that his father was pleased with the idea of his trying to speak and that I could count on him.

Then I carefully selected another boy somewhat of a leader, and gave him the same explanation of my plan, and finished by stating that Nate had already pledged me he would declaim. This was enough, he would do what Nate would do; I could count on him.

In this way I proceeded until I had my program completed. Then I announced to the school that at such a time we would give a declamatory program and read the names of those who expected to take part. It was a surprise to the school and awakened great interest.

I selected, or aided the boys in selecting, declamations and for several weeks gave my spare time

before school of mornings and after school of evenings to training them to speak. They took great interest in trying to do their best, and the close companionship this drilling them brought about between the boys and myself was of the greatest value to us both.

In all this work Nate was the one that unconsciously to himself and the others helped me to bring about the desired result. He was no longer a "thorn in the flesh" to the principal but rather a "spur" to the school to press on to better things.

Do not think I mean to say that Nate was a perfect model in deportment. He was a strong-willed boy and sometimes let his boyishness lead him to do things that were not strictly in accord with the discipline of the school, but he was always easily brought to proper conduct by an appeal to his sense of honor; he was manly through and through.

Nate's habits of study were different from most boys; he would sit in the high school apparently gazing around the room, a smile on his face as if bent on mischief and waiting his opportunity; and yet all the while his mind was occupied with some difficult point in a lesson. If it happened to be a problem in mathematics he were thinking out, if you were to watch him for a few moments, you would

see him take up his pencil and figure rapidly for a short time. He was putting in form what he had been thinking out, and generally he was sure of the result before he made use of his pencil.

I remember one teacher whom he annoyed very much at first by this habit. She said to me: "Nate doesn't study to do much good while I am in charge of the room but spends most of his time looking around; now and then he figures a little but not long at a time."

This was before I knew him well so at her request I spoke to him about his spending so much time looking around the room when he should have his mind centered on his lessons. "But," said he, "I am studying when I'm looking around; I'm thinking out my problems and then afterwards I put them down. Don't I always have my lessons?" I had to admit that I heard no complaints of his not preparing his lessons. As we knew him better we found that he was all the time at work even when apparently gazing around the room.

Most of his school work he prepared during school hours, except his mathematical problems. These he often carried in his mind and solved them while engaged at other work.

His parents were wealthy and took great delight in their children. At home Nate exhibited quite a

liking for mechanical work and the father, to encourage him, fitted up a room for a shop and supplied him with whatever tools he called for. Before he graduated from the high school, Nate was a fine gun-smith, an expert in repairing locks, guns, and bicycles. During the last two years of his high school course, his mornings, evenings, and Saturdays, were given to this kind of work. He often made a day's wages after school of an evening. This work in no way interfered with his school work.

During the three years Nate was in the high school he was one of the most loyal, helpful high school boys I have ever known and his leadership had a marked influence over the younger boys. These boys who have the faculty of leadership are a great blessing to any school if they are wisely turned in the right direction.

## CHAPTER XVII

### AL AND WALTER

There had been no fighting among our high school boys on the way to and from school for almost a year, when one noon I was much surprised to learn that two of the best boys in school had engaged in a fist fight with a large boy from one of the grammar grades.

It happened in this way: Al and Walter were walking along when the grammar grade boy came up to Al and spoke in a manner that made Al very angry. Quick as flash Al resented the words and instantly they were fighting. The grammar grade boy was as old as Al and a better trained fighter, so Walter at once stepped in to help his friend. It was on one of the public streets of the town and as

usual attracted a crowd and caused a great commotion.

I felt heartily ashamed of the whole affair. Such things had once been so common that no one took much note of them, but now that we had gone almost a year without anything of the kind, this seemed all the more disgraceful to the school; but while I was ashamed of it, I was in no way out of heart over the break in the good record we had been making. Such breaks always come; the only problem is to so deal with them that in the end good lessons may be given the school and the possibility of such occurrences in the future lessened.

I hastily considered the matter that I might have some plan of action mapped out in mind to present when school opened for the afternoon. I knew everyone was anxious to know what would be done.

We opened school as usual. Without attracting any attention the boys were quietly requested to pass to my office, where I met them. They were both humiliated at what they had done. There had been time for their tempers to cool and they could see how unfortunate their conduct was for themselves and for the school.

I said to them that once fighting had been so common on the way to and from school that people living on the school street lost all respect for the

school; that for almost a year there had been no trouble of any kind and that the change had been so marked that the people of the whole town felt proud of it; but now a break had been made that would take us a year at least to live down; that the fight had lessened the respect that the people had for us and also put before the younger boys an example that would make them feel that they too could get mad and fight on any provocation; that while we could not help what had been done, we must try to prevent like happenings in the future.

“And now, boys,” said I, “you say you are sorry you engaged in the fight, and I believe you are and am willing to forgive you; but the evil effect of this wrong doing on yourselves and on others, I cannot so easily clear away.” “In the first place, there must be some punishment connected with this that will cause you to stop and think before giving away to unruly tempers; in the second place, the other boys of the school must see that wrong-doing on the part of leading boys in the high school meets its just deserts as quickly as with any others; this, I know, you will say is nothing more than fair.”

“What that punishment should be, I do not know.” “I will not be hasty in this, neither will

I take it on myself alone to decide, but will ask you to tell me what you think it should be ; you understand the offense and I am sure will try to put a just estimate on it, so you may think it over until to-morrow morning, when you will report to me."

The next morning they met me in my office but said they could think of nothing to suggest ; for me to make the punishment whatever I thought right and they would abide by my decision without any complaining.

In the meantime I had not been idle but had weighed the offense trying to take every circumstance into consideration ; Al and Walter were two of my most trusty boys in the high school ; Al's quick temper was the only thing that ever gave him any trouble and on this occasion there was some provocation ; Walter had never before been reproved for anything ; they were two boys whose high school records for the year had been as clear as such records can be ; they had shown a willingness to submit to whatever I required and to do it in a pleasant spirit ; there had been no self-justification.

I said to the boys that I had one solution to offer ; if it did not meet their approval, we would try to find one that would. My solution was that from that day on until such a time as I saw fit to relieve them, they should not come to school or go



home from school with the other pupils; they should remain at home until the last bell began to ring, then come to school down one of the back streets which I designated; that when school was dismissed at noon and evening they should remain in their seats until all others were gone, then go home by the back street; and that in order that all might know that the offense had not been passed over I would explain to the school what they were to do.

The boys said that they were willing to follow out this plan. Before we dismissed school that noon, I talked to the school of the fight. I said nothing unkind of the boys, I spoke of their almost perfect record in the past, and of how proud we all felt that fighting had so long ceased to take from the good name of our high school; and that while we all felt that the fight had hurt us, we must try the harder to guard ourselves against such things in the future. The school was with me in sympathy and so were Al and Walter. Then I explained what we had agreed upon and asked that the fight and everything connected with it be dropped as a subject of conversation.

I heard no more of it. Al and Walter kept their part to the very letter for two months, without a sour word, or an unpleasant look.

At the end of the second month I said: "Boys, you have regained in every way your place in the school, and you are free to go and come with the others."

I was in the high school several years after this but fighting among the high school boys was never again clothed with the semblance of respectability.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### WASH

Shortly after I began my work in the — schools, I discovered a boy in one of the seventh grades, a colored boy of about fifteen years of age, who was very irregular in attendance, the mother always writing an excuse for him notwithstanding the fact that when he was not in school he spent much of his time in the neighborhood of the school apparently loafing.

After consulting with his teacher I was convinced that there was no good reason for his being absent so often and I decided that there must be a different arrangement and such "excused" truancy stopped.

A day or two later he was absent from school again. That day, soon after school opened at noon, as I was going from the building in which his

school was located, I happened to look down a by-street and saw my colored boy peeping out of a door of a planing mill to watch when I should be out of sight. I said to myself "that boy will from now on either be in school regularly or spend his time elsewhere than in the neighborhood of the school house."

The next morning he was still absent. I went to see his mother. I talked to her about Wash and his school work; how important it was for him to be there every day, how much he could do if he were only regular in attendance. She seemed pleased that I took so much interest in him but finally said: "Well, Wash., he don't like his teacher and he don't like to go to school, so I let him go errands for me. He's not playing truant, he's goin' errands."

"But Mrs. T——," said I, "You cannot afford to work so hard to support Wash. and have him spend most of his time loafing around the streets. He could do your errands and still be in school all day. You and your girls work very hard; Wash. is better able to work than any of you, and if he is not going to be in school to do any good, he had better get a job of work. Where is he now?" "O, he has gone down town to get me a spool of thread," she replied.

I told her what I knew to be true, that Wash. was doing some things while loafing around that would get him into trouble and that the best thing for her to do was to help us hold him in school or put him to work.

But there was nothing to be gained by talking further with her for she finally said that as he didn't like his teacher she couldn't make him go to school. (He had an excellent teacher.)

I left her determined that, while she could not help me in the least, I would find some other way to get that boy off the streets and away from the neighborhood of the schools if I could not get him to attend school regularly.

As I passed down the street I met one of our city officers, one who had been quite active in helping me enforce the compulsory attendance law; I said to him that there were two or three boys, beyond the compulsory age, hanging around the neighborhood of the Central School that I would like to compel either to attend school regularly or go to work. I then told him of Wash.

He knew the boy only too well and was informed as to his conduct, which had not been of the best, by any means. "I'll send him to the reform school if he does not attend school regularly," said he, and he meant it. "May I go and tell his

mother that you said you would send Wash. to the reform school if he does not attend school every day?" I asked. "Yes, go and tell her, and if he does not change his course at once, I'll send him there in a hurry."

I did not wait to inquire on what grounds he would commit the boy but I knew that he thought that he had all the evidence necessary. I lost no time in delivering the message. "Mrs. T——," said I, "Mr. R—— sent me to tell you that if Wash. did not at once enter school and attend regularly, he would send him to the reform school."

"Law goodness," said she, "we don't want him to go there shoah." "No," said I; "you do not for if he goes there it will be a long time before you see him. The best thing for Wash. is to get him into school at once and keep him there." "He'll be in this afternoon, shoah," replied she, "and he'll be there all the time."

I knew that Wash., as well as his mother, would be frightened when they knew that Mr. R —— had made such a threat.

Wash. came to school that afternoon and was regular in his attendance to the close of the year.

Here was a well-meaning but weak-willed mother, a mother with no control of her boy. This was the cause of his truancy. Whether or not the medicine

was properly administered, I know not, but I do know that it at least stayed the ravages of the disease in his case.

All this was done kindly, so that the family feel that I am their friend even though they must bend to my will in school affairs.

## CHAPTER XIX

### REX

Rex was about ten years old and was working in a broom factory when school opened. When we found that he was not in school the truant officer called at the home to inquire about him. His mother said that he had work and that she thought it was her place to say whether or not her boy should go to school; that she did not believe in a law that took the control of her boy out of her hands. As he did not immediately put in an appearance, I went with the truant officer to see the mother. She said he had quit work but she did not know whether or not he would go to school.

I knew from her strong face that if she said Rex must go, he would go. I talked with her trying to lead her to see the importance of her boy's being in school, appealed to her pride that her boy should



have the same show to get along as her neighbor's boys who were in school, and then kindly but firmly insisted that there was no question, the boy must be in school at least four months, the compulsory limit; and I said that I hoped that she would not make it necessary for me to go to further trouble to enforce the law.

She agreed to send Rex the next morning but said after that we would have to take charge of him, for he did not like to go to school. I knew when she said he would be there the next morning that he would come, but I also knew that she did not expect him to be there every day.

Rex came the next morning and for a number of days. Then he was reported absent, and the truant officer looked him up and brought him to school.

An incident happened at this time that gave me almost complete control of him, and thus far has saved all trouble. A thieving man employed Rex and another boy to steal the brass trimmings off of a locomotive that was being dismantled, and to carry them to a place where he dared take possession of them. He gave the boys a few pennies for their work. The theft was discovered, the man and the boys were arrested, and there was talk of sending the boys to the reform school. The man lay

in jail three months. I investigated the affair, and knowing all felt that it would not be right to deal with the boys too severely. I made a plea privately in behalf of the boys, asking that their parents be instructed that the boys must attend school regularly or they would be sent to the reform school; that the sentence should not be executed so long as the boys attended school every day.

My request was granted, the sentence was stayed, and they were permitted to remain at home during good behavior.

The boy that played truant plays truant no more, and the mother sees to it that he is in school. Among "her class" she is one of my strong supporters in enforcing the law she once tried hard to evade. My words in favor of giving her boy another trial won her to my side, and made her feel that I was a friend, and not simply trying to take away her rights.

## CHAPTER XX

### CARL AND SOME OTHER BOYS

Carl was twelve years of age ; a bright, sturdy boy. His mother had died when he was six years old. For several years after his mother's death he lived with his grand-parents. They became tired of him, as he was too self-willed for them to control. Then his father took him to live with him. The father and the boy lived and kept house for a number of weeks in a single room. The father is an honest, hard-working man. As he told me a few weeks ago, he would get up in the morning, cook their breakfast and eat his own while the boy was still asleep. The father is a teamster and is engaged in hauling hay from the country. After he left in the morning he saw no more of Carl until noon, when they ate dinner together ; then he knew no more of him until evening. In the evening the father would

often go out in town, and Carl, left to himself, did the same. Do you wonder, that with such home conditions it was a difficult task to hold him regularly in school?

Frequently he would be reported absent. The truant officer at first had trouble to find the father, but when he did find him the father was much worried about his boy, for he wanted him to be in school every day. We not only notified the father but the police as well, so that they would bring Carl in if found on the street. But for some time he was more than an equal for his father, the police, and the truant officer. Before school time in the morning he would take a dog or two and "skip" to the country to hunt rabbits.

One evening his father whipped him very severely and made him promise that he would go to school the next morning, but it seems the dogs and rabbits had a greater influence on him than the whipping, he went hunting.

I talked with Carl, cultivated his acquaintance, and tried to find out why he was so determined to be out of school. All he would say was that he liked to go to school bad days but would rather go hunting good days.

He was not an unpleasant boy in school, the only difficulty was to get him into school. The fact

that he always went to the country made it hard for the truant officer to catch him.

I realized all the time that what the boy needed was a home where some one would look after him. I finally learned that he had an aunt in town. I saw her and told her that I thought a good home would do away with the boy's truancy. She finally agreed to take him into her home, although she was not really able to do it. He lived with her for a number of weeks until his father moved from our town, and as long as he was with her he never again played truant.

While working with this boy and studying his case, I felt that one great need of the State to-day is parental schools, accessible to districts outside of the large cities, where habitual truants whose home conditions are such as to render it almost impossible to keep them in school, could be sent. Schools where truants could be sent and no stigma attach itself to them for having been there. Places where there would be no suggestion of a criminal class.

One afternoon four boys were reported absent from school. Before the day was over the truant officer brought word that the four boys were spending the afternoon sunning themselves down by the railroad just outside the town. They were seventh

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and eighth grade boys. Some one had seen them and notified the officer. I did not ask him to bring them in. I knew they would come of their own accord in the morning, and that would be the best time to meet them. They were not habitual truants.

The next morning they were in school. I sent for them to come to my office one at a time. The first that came was fourteen years of age, and a good fellow. I asked him why he was out of school the afternoon before, how he happened to be out. He told me the whole story. One boy had dared the others to stay out of school and he couldn't take a dare. I then asked if he did not think we would find it out. He said he knew we would but he did not "like for the others to back him down." He then said, "Give me a good whipping, I ought to have it; so just give it to me;" and he was ready to take it.

I talked with him a few moments longer and tried to place a just estimate on the offense and not to magnify it so that he would think he had committed an unpardonable crime. Then I told him I would let him know in the evening what the punishment would be.

One after another I interviewed them. Each one told me what I knew to be true; no one tried

to excuse himself, and each one said that he had done wrong and ought to suffer the penalty whatever I thought it should be.

The one point I aimed at in my talk with them was to be just, neither underestimating nor overestimating the offense. When boys know that we are just, and our sense of justice must be from a boy's point of view largely, there is little difficulty in settling troubles with them.

In the evening I met the four together and submitted what seemed to me the proper thing to do; not to whip them as some of them had suggested, but to let them remain thirty minutes each evening until the time lost should be made up. I asked them if they thought it fair or if they could suggest a better arrangement, saying that I should be glad to have them do so if they could. They said it was all right, that they would be glad to settle it that way.

I did not pledge them not to do so again, but said to them pleasantly as we parted: "Boys, I hope you will try not to get us into this kind of trouble again."

Theirs was only a sporadic case of truancy and I do not know but that it proved a real good; it brought the boys and myself into closer touch; I saw more real worth in them than I had seen before,

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and as they left my office I could but admire the real manliness of the boys notwithstanding their faults.

Three years ago when visiting a school in an eastern city I happened to step into a fifth grade room. I had been there but a moment before I felt the harsh, forbidding atmosphere. You know you can feel such things even before understanding the cause. The teacher's voice was harsh and rasping as a file. Presently she turned to me and said: "Do you have many bad boys in your school?" "No," I replied, "very few." "We do," continued she, "they are most all bad!" Now I think that if a boy is ever justified in playing truant it is when he has such a person for his teacher.

Sometimes I have transferred a boy from one teacher to another in the same grade, for the sake of giving him a teacher who could so interest him that he would cease to play truant. This is a simple but very effective means of preventing truancy where the cause is weak parental authority at home, and a teacher at school who fails to strike the proper responsive chord in the boy.

In all I have said of these boys and truancy my aim has been to bring out the thought that we must treat each individual case on its own merits,



and that to do this, there must be a clear understanding of the causes. It pays in smaller cities and towns for the superintendent to become personally acquainted with those who have a tendency to truancy. Often, if he is a man of warm heart, his words do more, much more, than the words of the teacher toward interesting the boy in his school work. We, superintendents and teachers, and in the larger cities principals and teachers, should know the home conditions in such cases to have the sympathetic support of parents where it is most needed. We cannot handle people with tongs and draw forth the proper response. We must understand and appreciate, from their point of view, the life they live to be helpful to them.







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